ULTIMATE GAMING SERIES

£9.99
MARIO SPECIAL

Nintendo
THE OFFICIAL NINTENDO MAGAZINE

PRESENTS THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

MARIO

30 YEARS OF MARIO
BECOME A MARIO MASTER WITH OUR GUIDE TO 30 YEARS OF CLASSIC GAMES!

PLUS!
THE HISTORY OF MARIO!
GREATEST MARIO POWER-UPS!
THE SCIENCE OF MARIO KART!
MARIO KART'S BEST TRACKS!
AND MUCH MORE!

+

25 INCREDIBLE MARIO SECRETS **REVEALED!**

MARIO KART 8

The entire story of Mario's multiplayer masterpiece!

SUPER MARIO 3D LAND · **SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD** · SUPER MARIO GALAXY
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2 · MARIO KART 7 · **NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U**

Future
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MARIO
PRINTED IN THE UK
£9.99
ISBN 978178389128-3
9 781783 891283 >

Nintendo

THE OFFICIAL NINTENDO MAGAZINE

PRESENTS THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

MARIO

Welcome to this special celebration of all things Mario. The iconic plumber has just entered his 33rd year and is on the cusp of conquering the charts anew with the magnificent *Mario Kart 8*. Worried that, come release day (30 May), you'll be lost to this world of anti-gravity karts and physics-defying bends, we figured we'd celebrate his career in the calm before the storm.

Mario's career is unlike any of his gaming peers: he made his name as a bounding saviour of princesses, but has gone on to wield water-spraying backpacks, dominate space, star in a range of hilarious RPGs and prove his might in a range of sporting activities. It'd take several volumes to explain the intricacies of such a life, so we've chosen to focus on those games that matter most: his 2D platformers (both old and New), his 3D adventures and his various works of kart.

Throughout this special you'll find thousands of passionate words written by the biggest Mario maniacs on the planet. With any luck you'll count yourself amongst them by the end. Enjoy!

ULTIMATE GAMING SERIES

Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.
Tel 01225 442244 **Fax** 01225 732275 **Email** mario@futurenet.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Matthew Castle, Alex Dale, Tom East, Kate Gray, Mark Green, Daniel Griffiths, Mike Jackson, Steve Jarratt, Neil Long, Will Morse, Adam Norton, Matthew Pellett, Will Porter, Dale Pratley, Chris Schilling, Chris Scullion, Joe Skrebels, Rory Smith, Rich Stanton

SENIOR TEAM
Editorial Director Jim Douglas
Creative Director Bob Abbott
Group Senior Editor Dan Dawkins
Group Art Director Graham Dalzell

PRODUCTION
Production Controller Marie Quilter
Production Manager Mark Constance

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING
Ad Manager Andrew Church (020 7042 4233)
Group Marketing Manager Sam Wight
Senior Marketing Executive Tilly Michell
Sales Director Nick Weatherall
Marketing Executive Antonella Matia
Account Executive Chris Furness
Advertising Production Coordinator Nathan Drewett
Commercial Buyer Karen Flannigan

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Senior Product Manager Adam Jones
Phone our UK hotline 0844 848 2852
Phone our International hotline on +44 (0)1604 251045 If you would like to purchase the images featured in this publication, please visit www.futuremediastore.com or email mediastore@futurenet.com

LICENSING
International Licensing Director Regina Erak (+44 (0) 1225 732 359)

FUTURE PUBLISHING
Managing Director of Technology, Film and Games Nial Ferguson
Deputy Managing Director of Film and Games Clair Porteous
Head of Games Group Lee Nutter
UK CEO Zillah Byng-Maddick

Subscribe online at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
Printed in the UK by William Gibbons
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 020 7429 4000.

abc

Want to work for Future?
Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs

Future

Future produces high-quality multimedia products which reach our audiences online, on mobile and in print. Future attracts over 50 million consumers to its brands every month across five core sectors: Technology, Entertainment, Music, Creative and Sports & Auto. We export and license our publications.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Maddick
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
CFO Zillah Byng-Maddick
Tel +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

© Future Publishing Limited 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.

Future Games: The First Choice For Gamers. This magazine is brought to you by Future Publishing Ltd., the makers of *Edge*, *PC Gamer*, *Official XBox Magazine* and *Official PlayStation Magazine* and *The Ghost Of NGamer*.

FSC www.fsc.org MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C007184

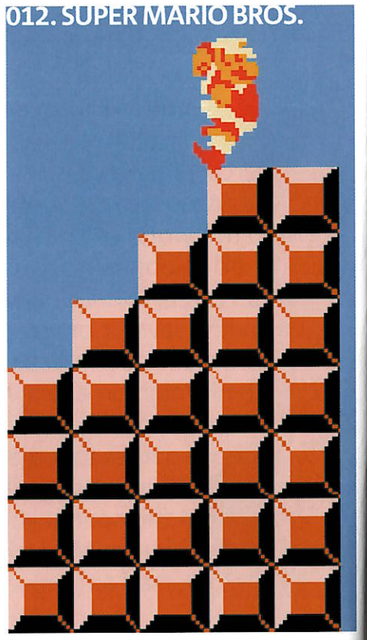
We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).

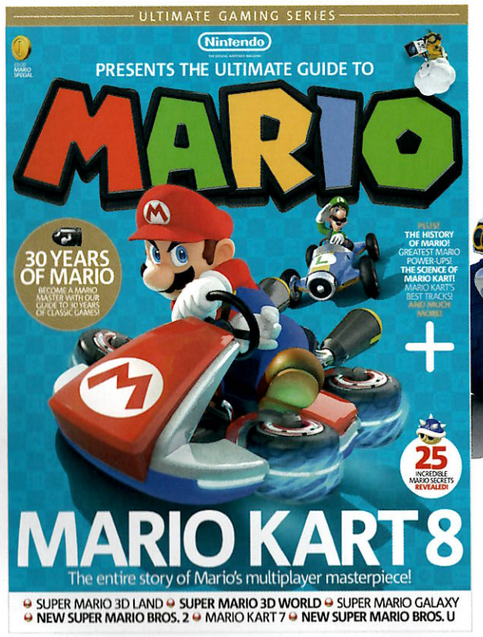
recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

PRESENTS THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MARIO

Contents

102. DEFYING GRAVITY


012. SUPER MARIO BROS.



On The Cover

We thought we'd mix it up this month by putting Mario on the cover. Yes: Mario! On a Nintendo magazine. They called us crazy for doing it, but we stuck to our guns and here we are. If this fails, we'll resort to plan B: a *different* picture of Mario.

Retro Mario

012. SUPER MARIO BROS.
The first killer videogame app sold Nintendo consoles by the tens of millions, and secured Mario's place in videogame history

016. SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
The bizarre story of the unconventional sequel to Super Mario Bros. that divides fans the world over, cuasing lots of Heart Pounding Panic!

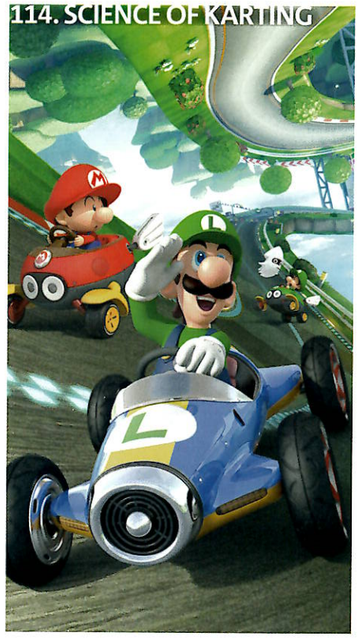
018. SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
Before Mario had a whole world to himself it had to be invented and Super Mario Bros. 3 is nothing but a pure blast of unending invention

022. SUPER MARIO WORLD
Mario without walls. Mario without limits. When the SNES arrived in 1992, the 8-bit hero turned sweet 16 with style...

Features

028. THE 25 GREATEST POWER-UPS 062. THE 25 GREATEST MARIO SECRETS 102. DEFYING GRAVITY 114. THE SCIENCE OF MARIO KART

042. SUPER MARIO GALAXY


114. SCIENCE OF KARTING

134. NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U

3D Mario

036. SUPER MARIO 64
Mario stops sending his 2D postcards and leaps into a new 3D world that changed gaming forever

040. SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
Mario's GameCube holiday from hell makes one hell of a playground for Nintendo fans!

042. SUPER MARIO GALAXY
In space no one can hear you go "wahoo" "hooray" "woohey" "yipee" and other such noises

046. SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2
Mario returns to space in an adventure that is better than the first time he went to space

058. SUPER MARIO 3D LAND
How do you follow the mighty *Galaxy*? You crush its cool ideas into stereoscopic obstacle courses

066. SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD
How do you follow *3D Land*? Expand its obstacle courses into longer levels with better graphics

Mario Kart

070. SUPER MARIO KART
This is where it all began. Read these words to find out how what 'it' is and how it all began

074. MARIO KART 64
This is like the first one only with more friends to swear at when you get shelled on the last lap

080. MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
It's more Mario Kart, this time with two drivers in every car. Controversial, but fun with it...

084. MARIO KART DS
Imagine Mario Kart in your pocket, powersliding around all those used tissues – this is like that

090. MARIO KART Wii
The game that made you stick your Remote in a plastic wheel like the giant toddler you are

096. MARIO KART 7
Imagine Mario Kart in your pocket, powersliding around all those used tissues – this is that, in 3D

070. MARIO KART 8
Who needs more F-Zero when Mario has mastered anti-grav racing? (Answer: still us, thanks)

New Super Mario Bros.

122. NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.
In 2006 Nintendo went back to basics in the first true 2D Mario platformer in 15 years and we gobbled it up like the greedy gamers we are

122. NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii
In 2009 Nintendo went back to basics for a second time – there's going to be a theme here – and we gobbled it up like the greedy gamers we are

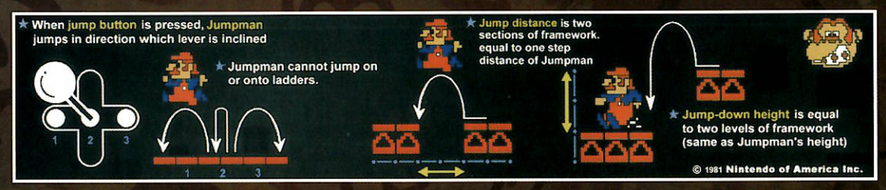
122. NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
In 2012 Nintendo went back to basics for a third time and while we didn't gobble it up quite as greedily, there was still mild gobbling going on

122. NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U
In 2012 Nintendo went back to basics for a fourth time, by which point we were stuffed, but we made room as it was for Wii U and looked tasty in HD

Mario's Prehistoric Past

2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the original Super Mario Bros, but Mario and Luigi have been kicking Koopa behind for even longer than that. Bound with us down memory lane as we explore the prehistory of Super Mario Bros, and examine how the technical limitations of the time brought gamers to a magical kingdom of evil mushrooms, flying turtles and even our hero's iconic 'tache!

This is how the game was pitched to *Donkey Kong* players. Sounds so easy!



JUMPMAN

It took Nintendo a while to settle on a name for their new hero. He was originally dubbed Ossan (Japanese for 'Middle-Aged Man'), before becoming 'Mr Video' and, more famously, Jumpman. Later, an employee at Nintendo of America coined the name 'Mario', as he reportedly resembled NoA's landlord.

FACE FUNGUS

8-bit limitations also explains why a Bic razor never touches Mario's upper lip. "I started by saying: 'Right, let's draw something that actually looks like a person's face!'" explains Mario's creator, Miyamoto. "I drew the eyes, the nose, the mouth and there weren't enough pixels! But if you draw a nose then a moustache, you don't really know if it's a mouth or a moustache." Hey, who needs a mouth when you've got a 'tache?

HAT

Mario's distinctive look is a result of form following function. The original Mario sprite was only 16 x 16 pixels in size, which meant they had to make every dot count. By plonking a hat on top of Mario's mighty mane, they were able to reduce the space it took to represent his hair down to just two lines.

OVERALLS

Because they only had three frames of animation to work with, the team initially found it difficult to put together a convincing running animation. They hit upon a winning formula, but for it to work Mario's arms needed to be a different colour from his body. And with that, Mario's love affair with overalls began.

SUPER MARIO

As we all know, when Mario crams a mushroom down his pipehole, he doubles in size and becomes Super Mario. How did Nintendo come up with the idea? As Miyamoto recalls: "We started off by doing tests to see how it would feel for the player to control a large character, double the size of Mario. As it felt really good, we continued to develop the idea. But then we discovered that it was more satisfying if Mario only increased in size part-way through the game."

KOOPA TROOPAS

Koopa Troopas made their debut as 'Shellcreepers' in the 1983 arcade game Mario Bros. (see overleaf). Designers Siheru Miyamoto and Gunpei Yokoi had already decided that Mario & Luigi would defeat their enemies by bopping the bricks underneath them and then nipping up to their level to finish them off. All they needed now was a shape for the enemy, one which would explain why their bellies were so much more vulnerable than the rest of their body. The tough-on-top/soft-on-the-bottom shellbacked turtle was the obvious choice.

PARAKOOPAS

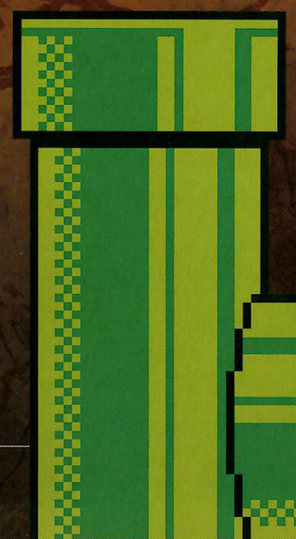
Unlike in our modern age, where game designers have acres of digital space to stretch their legs in, the NES gave only 40 kilobytes of programming space to work with. Miyamoto and his team needed to get creative during the development of *Super Mario Bros.* "I recall there was one time when we wanted a character that would fly up and down but we didn't have enough free space to make a new character", the designer recalled in a past interview. "So we were asking ourselves what we could do when we thought: why not try giving the turtles wings?". Thus, the Parakoopa was born.

GOOMBAS

The lowly Goomba came to be because the designers felt that the Koopa Troopas were simply too difficult f players to encounter straight off the bat. They needed something soft and squidgy that could be squished with a single stomp, and after much debate settled o the Goomba: a shiitake mushroom on legs. By this point in development, there was very little cartridge space left to play with, so they drew one foot bigger than the other and then flipped the image. When the two frames of animation were played together, it looked as if the Goomba was toddling along. Smart!

MUSHROOM

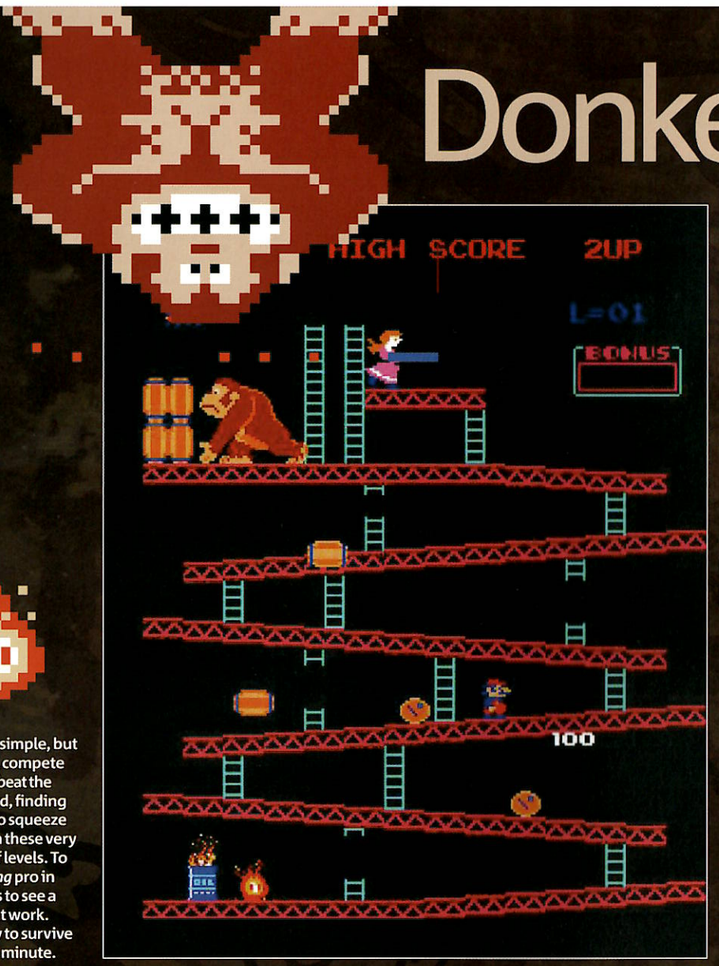
Miyamoto chose to give Super Mario power-ups the shape of a mushroom because of the fungus' long-running association with magical powers. But this presented a tiny problem; the player would meet an 'evil' mushroom that could kill them (the Goomba), so how could they communicate to the audience that this one was a 'good' mushroom? First, they decided to make it move away from the player (so you'd have to chase it), and secondly, they shaped the level design on slopes so that whatever happens, Mario winds up sliding the very first mushroom he encounters.



PIPES

While designing *Mario Bros.*, Miyamoto and Yokoi noted that the Koopas' movement patterns resulted in them gather at the bottom of the screen. They needed a device that would allow them to warp back to the top again. "Then, on the way home from the office, I spied a concrete wall in a residential area which had a number of drainage pipes coming out of it, and I thought: I can use that!" recalled Miyamoto. The pipes are green, rather than the more traditional grey, because technical limitations restricted the number of colours you could show on screen, and green is a colour that works well when combining two shades.

Donkey Kong

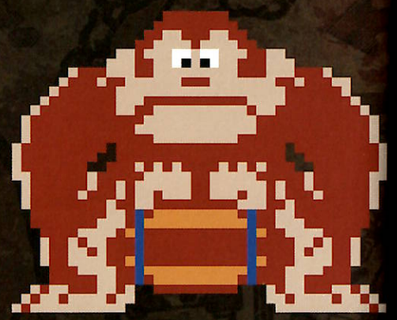


It may look simple, but players still compete at trying to beat the world record, finding new ways to squeeze points from these very stretches of levels. To watch a *Kong* pro in full swing is to see a true artist at work. We're lucky to survive for a whole minute.

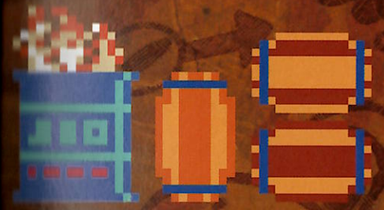
Mario made his bow in the 1981 arcade game *Donkey Kong*, which was one of the earliest examples of the platform game genre. The plot was as simple as they come; Mario's ladyfriend Pauline had been kidnapped by a simian lummox named Donkey Kong, forcing our hero to ascend a treacherous construction site in order to catch them up and win her back.

Although it's incredibly basic by today's standards, *Donkey Kong* was a very complex game for its time. It was the first game to use animated cutscenes and one of the very first to feature multiple screens (four in total each representing 25 metres of the construction site's total height). The very first screen, a maze of diagonal steel girders, remains one of the most enduring images in gaming history. Think Donkey Kong and you think Mario vaulting over barrels (or smacking into them, if you were as bad at the game as we were!).

But *Donkey Kong* nearly didn't have any jumping in it at all. Shigeru Miyamoto originally intended for it to be a maze game controlled exclusively with a joystick, but when he learned that the arcade cabinet would ship with an extra button, he began to experiment with ways to incorporate the extra input method into the game design. He imagined how someone would instinctively act if they saw a barrel rolling towards them, and thus Mario took his very first leap – a leap that would see him land firmly in the record books over the years to come...



> DONKEY KONG'S WORLD OF GIRDERS AND EVIL BARRELS REMAINS ONE OF GAMING'S MOST ICONIC IMAGES



The barrels appear to have minds of their own as they pick between falling down ladders or rolling on by. Being outsmarted by a barrel makes us sad.

DONKEY KONG JR

This 1982 *Kong* sequel turned the tables on the Marioverse as we knew it. This time Mario was cast as the bad guy; a maniac who was keeping poor old DK locked up in a cramped cage no more than a few pixels bigger than he was. It was up to DK's nimble, vine-climbing sprog Donkey Kong Jr to fight the good fight and free his father. Although *Donkey Kong Jr* didn't attain the same iconic status as its predecessor, it was still a fantastic game for its time and deserves to be remembered for more than just being 'that one time when Mario was a baddie'.

IT TAKES ALL-PORTS

Although it seems unimaginable these days, back in the early 1980s Nintendo used to allow their Mario games to appear on pretty much every rival format under the Sun. If anyone ever tells you that Nintendo doesn't play well with others we'd point them in the direction of a history book (or, indeed, this magazine), and show them the page about how *Mario Bros.* was ported to the Commodore 64, ZK Spectrum, Amstrad, Apple II, Atari 5200 and more. Ask your great-great-great-great-grandad. To ask his dad about it. Or just look it up on Wikipedia. The choice is yours!

MARIO BROS.

Shigeru Miyamoto and Gunpei Yokoi are two of the most influential figures in Nintendo history. So when they teamed up to create the first ever Mario game, there must have been a hint of professional competitiveness in the air as the two creative powerhouses exchanged ideas across the table. Scarcely wonder then that *Mario Bros.* took the form of a neat competitive multiplayer game where players scrapped and clawed for every last coin they could get.

Mario Bros. was a fixed-screen affair in which the two plumbers were tasked with clearing out New York's sewer system, which was clogged up with turtles, crabs, man-sized flies and other unlikely inhabitants. Enemies could only be defeated by flipping them onto their bellies with a strike from below and then kicking them off the screen before they could right themselves. Failing that, there was s a POW Block at the bottom of the screen which would kill all the enemies on the screen at the same time (as annoying to them as it to us when it happens in *Mario Kart Wii*), but it was best to save those for a rainy day.

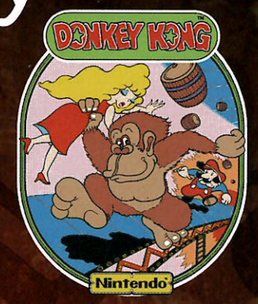
Sometimes the simplest games turn out to be the best ones, and *Mario Bros.*' insane multiplayer action still stands up to scrutiny today. So much so it still makes sporadic appearances; Nintendo decided to package it in as a freebie with all three GBA Super Mario Bros. remakes, and *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*'s end battle sideshow is a clear spiritual successor, to the extent that it even includes a level that directly parodies the original. Best of all, *Super Mario 3D World* has a new Luigi-flavoured version hidden as a bonus mode.

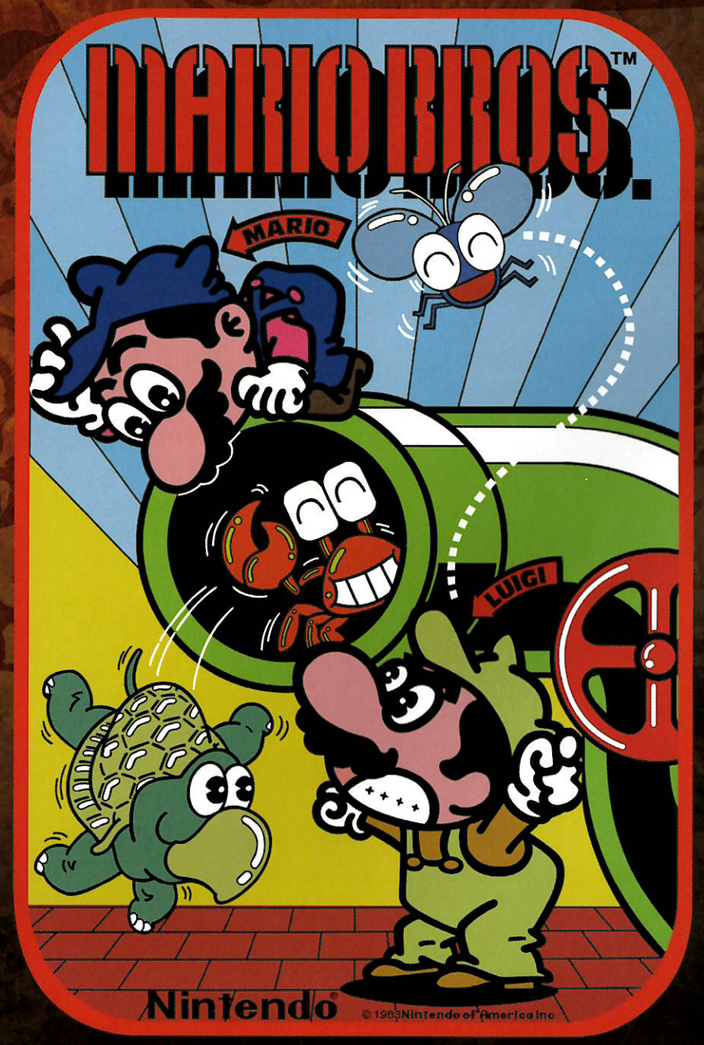
Although Mario has moved on from these simple sewer-dwelling days, the roots of the series are plain to see and it's a multiplayer experience that every gamer and their sat should strive to play at least once.

Art Monkey

Some 'Early Period' Mario!

It's not just the colour of his overalls that have changed. As these original coin-op artworks show, Mario looked very different back in the early '80s. From a lankier, silent movie-era villain on the original Donkey Kong coin-op, he then went stumpy and a bit, well, weird for *Mario Bros.* and *Donkey Kong Jr.* It is us or does he look related to the Pringles guy? From the look of his belly, he certainly appears to have a) popped and b) been unable to stop. It wasn't until *Super Mario Bros.* he became more like the Mario we know and love...





CONTENTS

Retro Mario

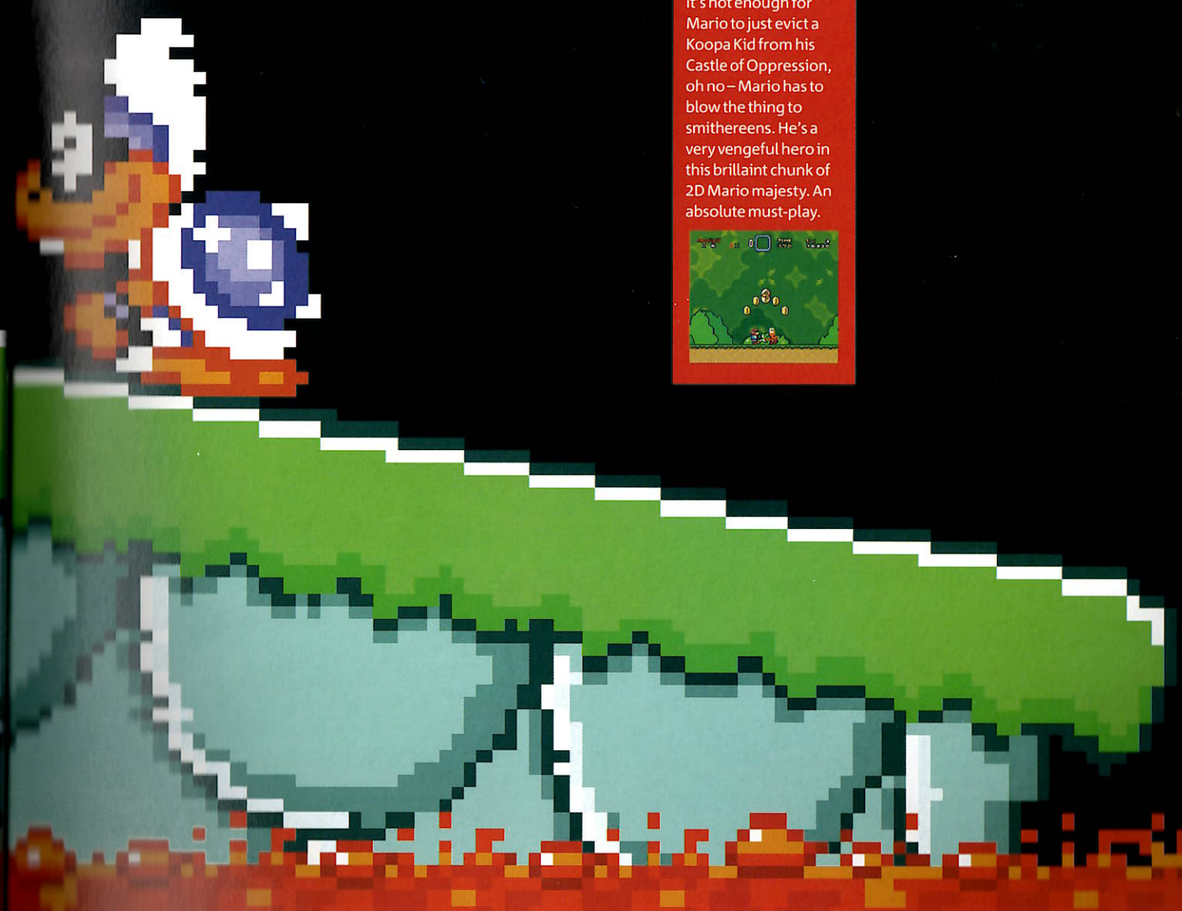
012 SUPER MARI O BROS. **016** SUPER MARIO BROS. 2 **018** SUPER MARIO BROS. 3 **022** SUPER MARIO WORLD **028** MARIO'S GREATEST POWER-UPS

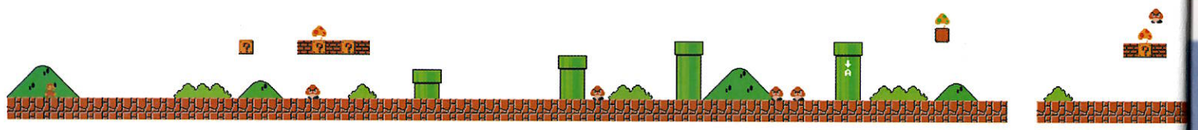
RETRO MARIO
INTRO

22

SUPER MARIO WORLD

It's not enough for Mario to just evict a Koopa Kid from his Castle of Oppression, oh no – Mario has to blow the thing to smithereens. He's a very vengeful hero in this brillaint chunk of 2D Mario majesty. An absolute must-play.





FORMAT NES OUT MAY 1987 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario Bros.

Let's (press) start at the very beginning, a very good place to start

WHAT IS IT

The grand-daddy of all console titles and the second biggest seller of all time (eclipsed now only by *Wii Sports*). It made Mario a household name and turned Nintendo into a gaming powerhouse.

The year is 1987. For some time now the UK has been gripped by a battle for gaming domination between the quirky, home-grown Sinclair Spectrum and the US upstart, Commodore 64. We were real fans of the technologically superior import, and were rapidly becoming greedy videogame junkies.

The C64 was pretty much at its prime around then, and was playing host to some truly unique, innovative games, driven largely by a host of brilliant UK and US developers. Beyond an unhealthy interest in coin-ops, we never paid much attention to the Far East – but times were changing. We'd heard tales of a Japanese games console that was going to be launched in the UK, and when ancient sister mag, *The Games Machine*, launched we got the chance to play with one ourselves.

Dare we say that at first we were just the tiniest bit unimpressed? Put away those pitchforks – we've obviously seen sense since then. Compared to the technically adept, colourful C64, the Nintendo Entertainment System felt clunky. The display was flickery, the colours were muted, and it came with a funny little joypad, when we were used to proper joysticks, with suckers on the base and big red triggers.

But, of course, it came bundled with *Super Mario Bros.* The sequel to Nintendo's modestly successful two-player coin-op proved to be a landmark in videogame history for many reasons – not least because it went on to shift over 40 million units. We'd heard good things about *SMB*, but I didn't think much of it at first. We'd been playing cutting-edge games like *The Last Ninja*, *Uridium*, *Wizball*, *Mercenary* and *Barbarian* (some of which are on the Wii's Virtual Console). By comparison, this simplistic side-scroller looked positively archaic (atually it was: the UK didn't get the NES until four years after it was launched in Japan, which is an age in videogame technology.)

This is where it all began. Look at those chunky ol' buttons. What a beauty.

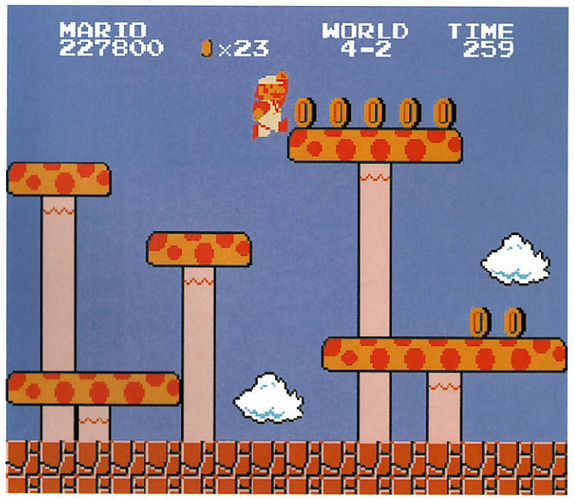
But like so many of Nintendo's titles, it proved to be a slow burner, gradually revealing its hidden depths over time. The carefully – some might say sadistically – crafted difficulty draws you in, providing a perfect mixture of progress and failure, offset by the ability to earn extra lives as you went along. It's the perfect balance of challenge and reward, agony and ecstasy, swaying between "Stupid game!" and "Okay, then: just one more go."

BROTHERS BEYOND

Super Mario Bros. is often lazily credited with introducing several new gaming innovations, but in truth, many of these were actually introduced in previous coin-ops or 8-bit computer titles. It's not the first side-scrolling game: that was *Defender*. It's not the first run 'n' jump platform game: that honour belongs to *Donkey Kong*. It didn't introduce power-ups or special powers: that was *Pac-Man*. But few games had combined so many clever ideas into such a cohesive and well-constructed whole, that made it addictively playable – and replayable.

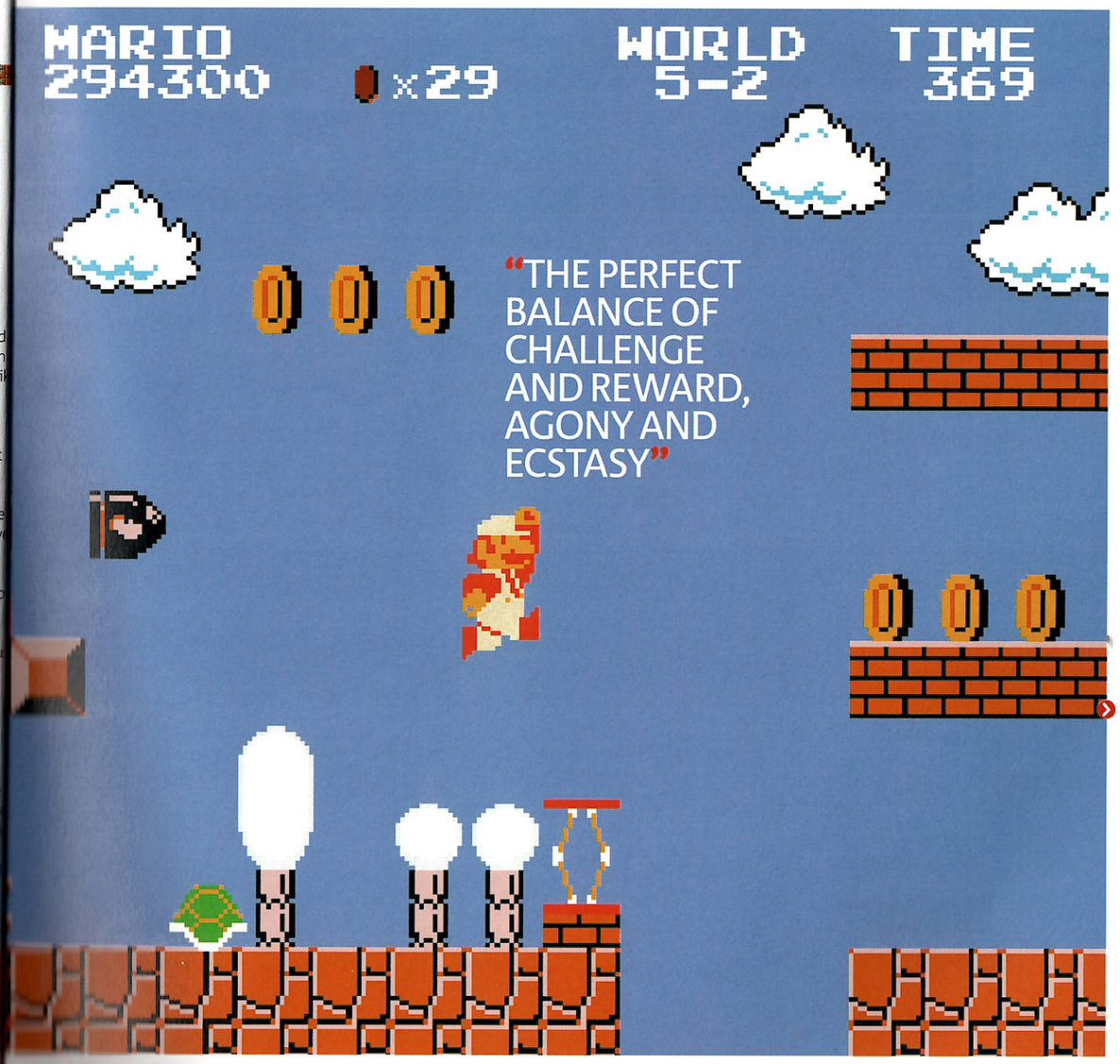
Unlike many of the more simplistic games of the time, *Super Mario Bros* does at least provide a quest: traverse the Mushroom Kingdom, defeat Bowser, rescue the princess. So right from the outset it lays down a challenge for you to complete, accompanied by a gently ticking countdown timer, just so you don't spend too long thinking about your next move. And once you've finally defeated Bowser and had a kiss from Princess Toadstool, you can do it all again, with the option to chose a starting level. Only this time you can do it against the clock (the fastest legal completion of the game without using glitches is a shade over five minutes); or with the highest number of lives; or with the largest score, or just for fun.

Certainly, *Super Mario Bros.* was one of the first action games that rewarded exploration, with its



PLAY IT NOW

Super Mario Bros. is available on Virtual Console on Wii, Wii U and 3DS. You've really no excuse not to play it now!



"THE PERFECT BALANCE OF CHALLENGE AND REWARD, AGONY AND ECSTASY"

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

BECOME SUPER MARIO

Collecting a 'shroom and growing, knowing that you were now two hits away from losing a life, was one of the first great moments in gaming.

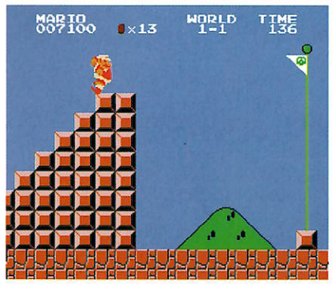
THE WARP ZONE

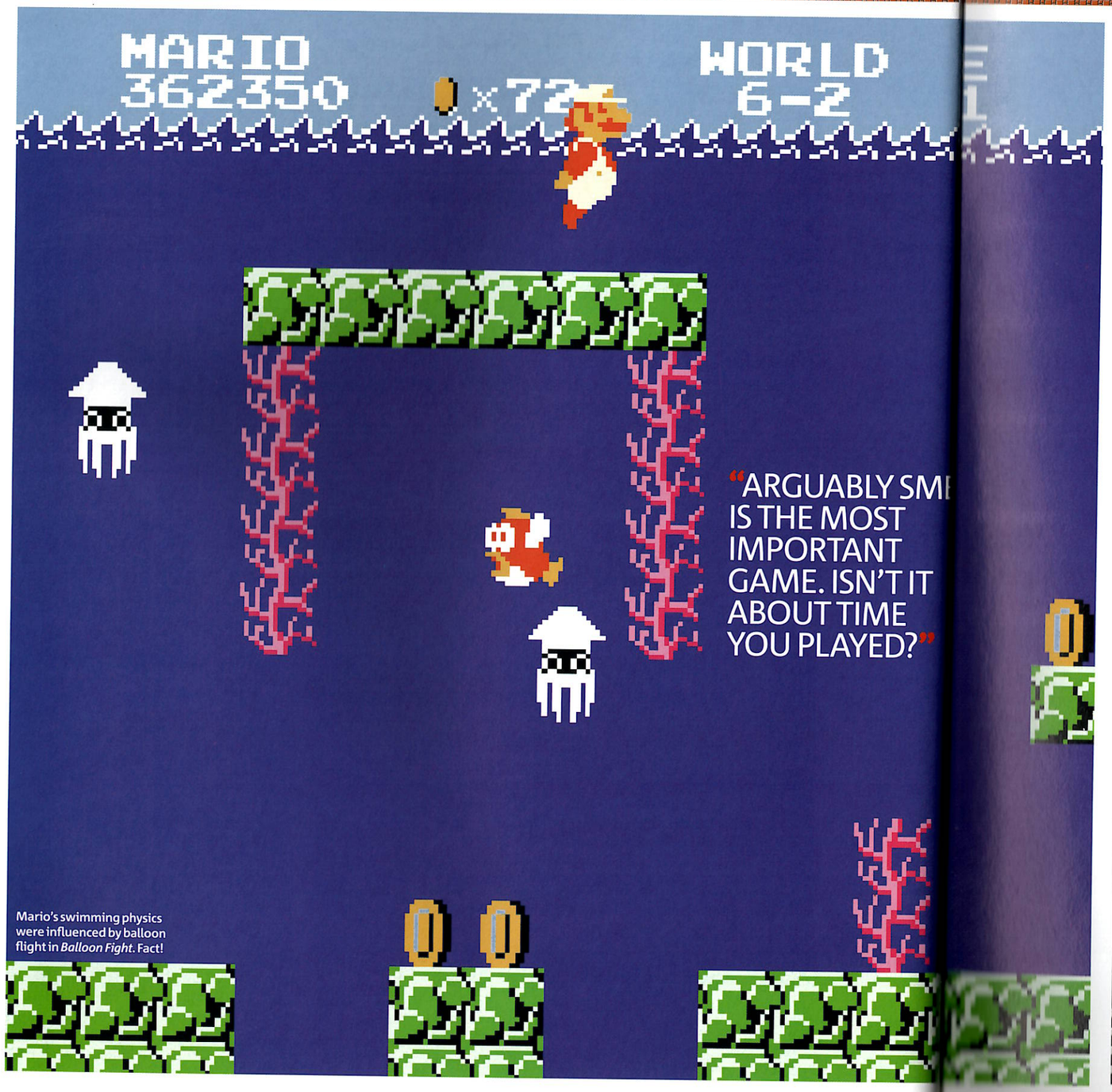
Jump off the platforms and you can run across the top of the screen. You end up in a room with Warp Pipes to levels you couldn't reach before.

TURTLE SHELL KICK

Hit a Koopa, they simply hide in their shells. A second jump, and they go hurtling across the floor, killing all enemies in their wake.

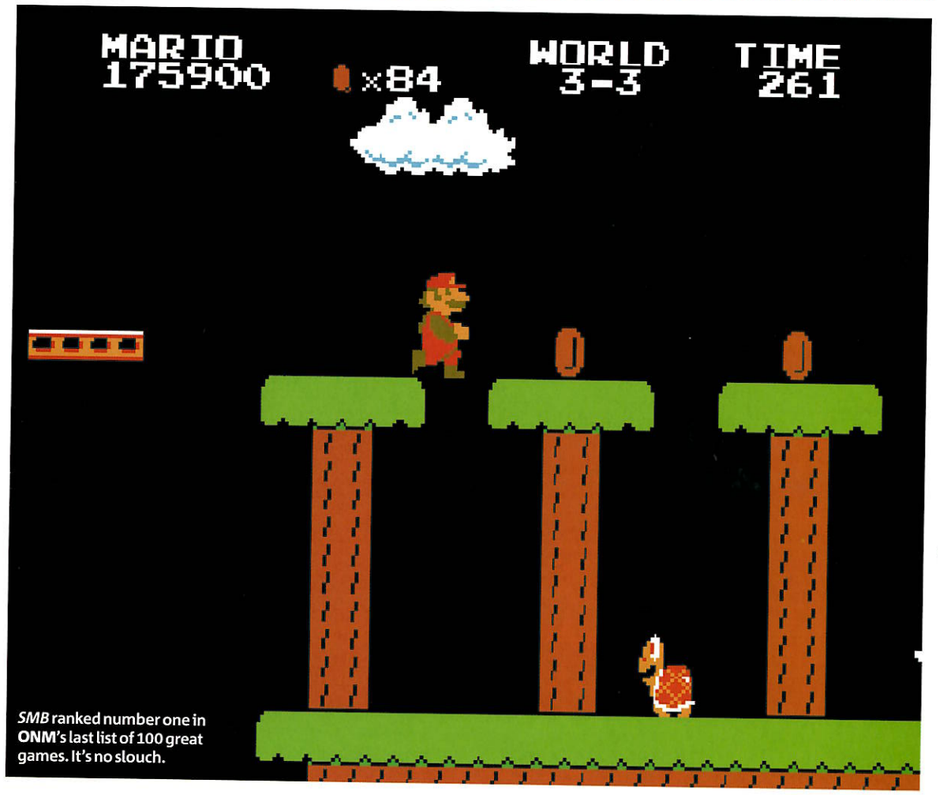
We'll never forget the first time we grabbed the top of a goal pole. It's truly heroic stuff.





"ARGUABLY SMB IS THE MOST IMPORTANT GAME. ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU PLAYED?"

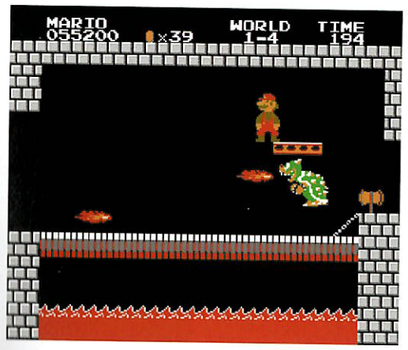
Mario's swimming physics were influenced by balloon flight in *Balloon Fight*. Fact!



SMB ranked number one in ONM's last list of 100 great games. It's no slouch.

wealth of secret passages, invisible blocks and warps to later levels. These are often located in obscure places and found usually by chance or trial and error. But once the game has revealed one of its secrets, you find yourself drawn into playing in a completely different way, motivated not by finishing the game but by finding new passages and hidden items.

There are few *Super Mario Bros.* payers who haven't at one time or another, just spent the odd hour headbutting every brick and empty space in a level, in the hope of revealing just one more invisible block, or the concealed entrance to a warp room.



The icing on the cake was *SMB*'s brilliant aesthetics. Despite the limitations of the NES, the characters were well designed and memorable, and the simplistic backdrops still managed to conjure up real atmosphere – helped in no small way by Koji Kondo's painfully catchy soundtrack. The importance of *Super Mario Bros* can't be understated. Without it, the NES (which was never a powerhouse console) might not have been such a hit in Japan. The lack of a populist killer app might well have meant no US or European release. Given that the likes of Atari and Coleco had been wiped out by the videogame crash of 1983, it would have been a brave company to back a new generation of games consoles in the west.

While videogames would have no doubt resurfaced, the new wave of personal computers would probably have secured a stronger foothold, reducing consoles to the status of toy – perhaps never to be revived again. Whichever way you look at it, it's clear that *Super Mario Bros.* had a massive effect on the industry and arguably remains the most important videogame ever created. So if you've not played it yet, isn't it about time you did? ✚

FORMAT NES **OUT** APRIL 1989 **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO EAD **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO

Super Mario Bros. 2

The difficult second album saw Mario getting weird

WHAT IS IT

A remake of *Doki Doki Panic* with level tweaks and redesigned characters. It was released in the west as a sequel to *Super Mario Bros.* when the Japanese original was turned down by Nintendo of America

After the success of *Super Mario Bros.* it was only natural that a sequel be made. In 1986, to placate its army of loyal followers, Nintendo released *Super Mario Bros. 2* in Japan for the Famicom Disk System – an external disk drive that used proprietary, double-sided floppy disks (for a whopping 112K of data).

In truth *SMB2* was more like *SMB1.5*: the director's cut. It was essentially a remixed version of the original, but with tweaked levels and a ramped-up difficulty level. Nintendo of America disliked this rehash of *SMB* and thought it might to be too frustrating for its US audience. For fear of damaging the franchise, the US release of *SMB2* was cancelled, to be replaced instead by a reworked version of *Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panikku – Dream Factory: Heart Pounding Panic*, in English.

Hey! It's the NES again. Still looking good. Man, I wonder if we'll get to see it on the *SMB3* page, too?

BIGGER BROTHER

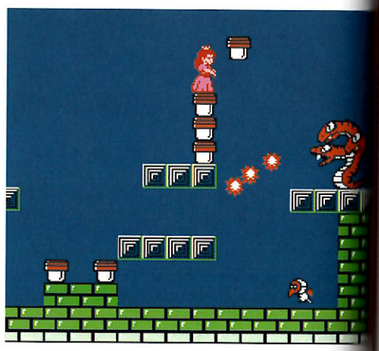
This title was originally made to promote Fuji TV and featured a family of mascots from the 1987 Yume Kojo (Dream Festival): Imajin, Mama, Lina and Papa. These were replaced by Mario, Luigi, Princess Toadstool and Toad respectively, each gaining a particular skillset (long jumps, high jumps, strength, for instance) which they would retain in later games. All four characters are playable, selected at the start of each level. *SMB2* is also the first game where Luigi is noticeably taller than his brother – a trait that continues to this day. Play is different to *SMB* in that no enemies can be killed by th usual jump-stomp method. Instead, you pull vegetables up from the ground and use them as missiles. There's no headbutting, no Goombas, no Koopas or Bowser. However there are still plenty of secret doorways, passages and hidden warp rooms, providing different routes to complete each level.

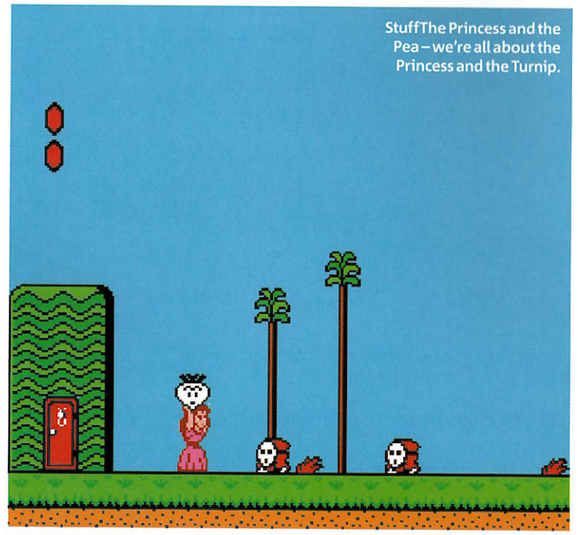
This westernised release often gets a bad press fo not being a true Mario game. But it was designed by Shigeru Miyamoto with a soundtrack By Koji Kondo, its heritage is without question. It also introduced many new elements that would become staples of th Mario Universe, such as a progressive health system and the ability to pick up and throw objects .

It's also significant for the debuts of several new characters, including Shy Guys and Bob-ombs. The former are small, robed creatures that wear masks a walk towards you. (Their features have never been revealed, but in the intro sequence of *Mario Power Tennis*, Luigi sees a Shy Guy without his mask on and shocked. We can only guess what horror lies beneat their stoic facade.) In *SMB2* Shy Guys can be dispatch simply by being picked up and thrown.

Bob-ombs are walking explosives that are droppe from the sky by a bird called Albatoss. These mechanical menaces can also be picked up and carri then thrown at other enemies to kill them.

While large chunks of the game feel decidedly different to *Super Mario Bros*, ultimately, *SMB2* isn't bad game – although it does get pretty hard. It's all easy to deride it for being a departure from its predecessor, but it's very possible that without this cross-fertilisation of ideas, the Super Mario series might have become staid and familiar. Besides, with million sales, that's the kind of abject failure of whic most game publishers can only dream. ✚

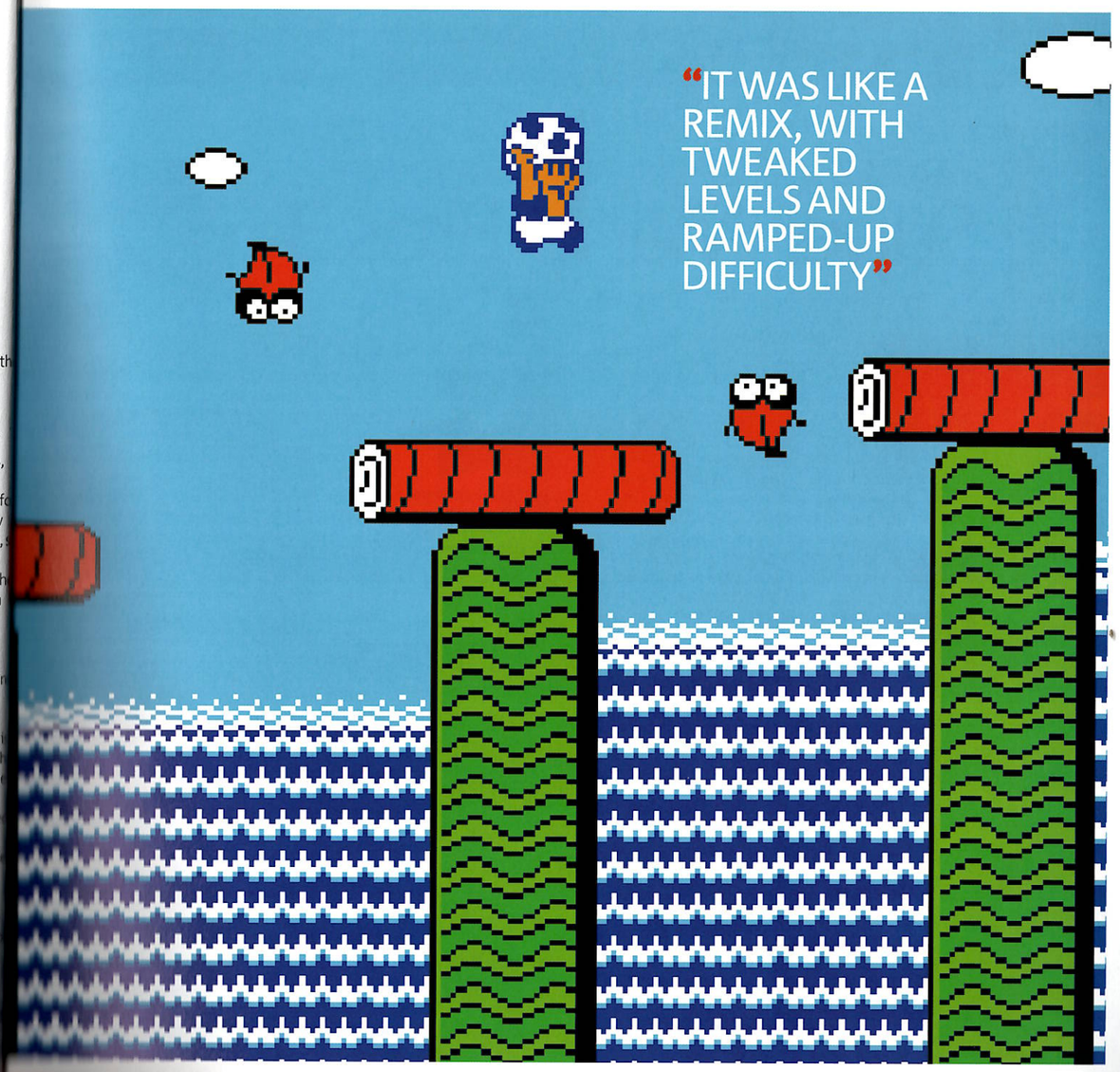




Stuff The Princess and the Pea – we're all about the Princess and the Turnip.

PLAY IT NOW

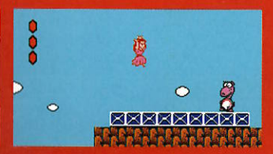
Super Mario Bros. 2 is currently available on Virtual Console on Wii, Wii U and the 3DS. TYou're just one download away from turnip-lobbing laughs-a-minute!



"IT WAS LIKE A REMIX, WITH TWEAKED LEVELS AND RAMPED-UP DIFFICULTY"

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

A WHOLE NEW WORLD



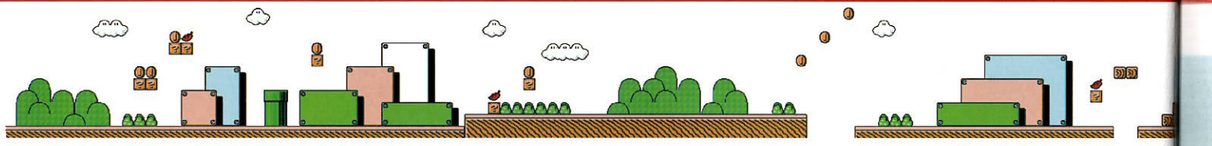
WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS?

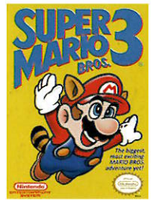
Super Mario Bros. 2 introduced the world to the bizarre creature that is Birdo. Its undetermined gender is a running gag in Nintendo games.

THE BIG REVEAL

Mario games have never been big on story, but this entry tries for a M Night Shyamalan-style twist: it was all a dream. It blew minds in 1989.

Heaving the correct items to the right place added a touch of puzzling to the proceedings.





FORMAT NES **OUT** AUGUST 1991 **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO EAD **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO

Super Mario Bros.3

The next chapter in our tale involves a... tail?

WHAT IS IT

The third in the Mario Bros. series was the last proper Mario game for the NES, and the launching pad for all subsequent 2D platformers.

Talking about *Super Mario Bros. 3* in 2014 risks turning into a numbers game. It sold more than 18 million copies worldwide, another million on its Virtual Console re-release, and stands as one of the biggest sellers ever, more than two decades later. Released in Japan in 1988 and in America a year after, it made more money than *E.T.* and has been a constant presence in top 10 lists ever since. It led to author David Sheff's famous assertion that Mario was more recognisable than Mickey Mouse. In Nintendo's television advert, thousands of children chant "Mario, Mario, Mario" as the camera pans back, eventually turning into Mario's face and the North American continent. It was, and remains, a bona-fide cultural phenomenon.

Hey, we were right: there is another picture of the NES. Once again we ogle its chunky, macho body.

WIZARD IDEA

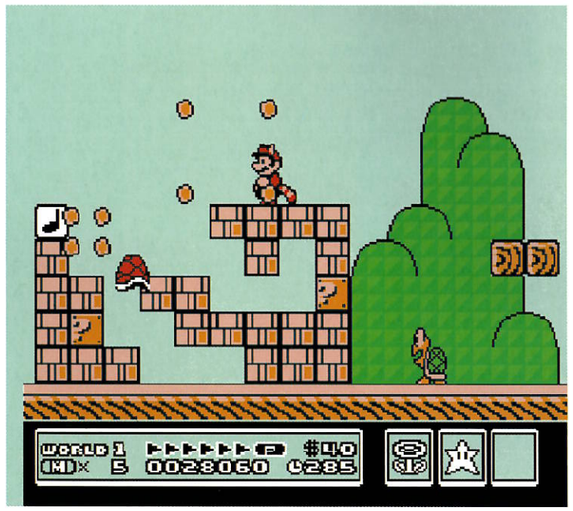
The anticipation for *Super Mario Bros. 3* was white-hot, stoked by Nintendo's crafty marketing: the game was part of the climax to the 1989 movie, *The Wizard*, offering a sneak peek months before release in the days before the internet. It not only lived up to this hype, but exceeded expectations. *SMB3* is one of Miyamoto's very finest projects and equal credit should be given to Takashi Tezuka, the oft-unsung designer mainly responsible for *SMB: The Lost Levels* (*SMB2* in Japan) who would go on to be the main driving force behind *Super Mario World*. *SMB3* is a masterpiece and a work of conscious artifice: the ve first thing you see is a curtain rising, as in a theatre, t show the title screen. The levels are constructed fro blocks that seem to be bolted onto the background, platforms are suspended by jerry-rigged ropes that attach to an unseen ceiling, and the end of every sin level doesn't quite fade to black: it just becomes bla End of the set. How does Mario power-up? He puts costumes. And it's a hell of a performance.

Where *Super Mario Bros.* let players run along t top of the screen to find a warp zone, *Super Mario Br 3* asks nothing less than that Mario fly and drop out the game: disappearing into unseen zones outside the television and pressing up to enter invisible doo To obtain the very first warp whistle, Mario drops behind the scenery – an amazing discovery, sure, b also one you'd never make on your own. If you kno about it, you're part of the club – it's a game that no only deserves devotion, but rewards it.

It's still one of the pinnacles of 2D design. It's o the first platformers to have both an X and Y axes, w levels asking the player to explore up and down as as left and right, and its locations crammed with cubbyholes and secret routes that reward a curiou mind. Its difficulty curve is also perfectly judged, n least because it gives the player some responsibili it: the initial stages offer up a cornucopia of power that can be stored and used when desired, which makes initial progress easier, but on your many subsequent journeys can be hoarded for a challen you now know is coming.

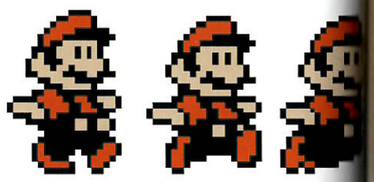
HAMMER TIME

Instead of menus, there's a world map – now stan in 2D platformers. Levels don't just follow one ano in sequence anymore, but branch off into alterna routes that might have a bonus tucked behind the can simply be ignored if you're in a rush. At the en each stage there's an airship to be conquered and you're not successful first time around, it has to b chased around the world for another go – meanw Hammer Bros. scarper along the same routes, he off Mario and forcing mini-showdowns with a

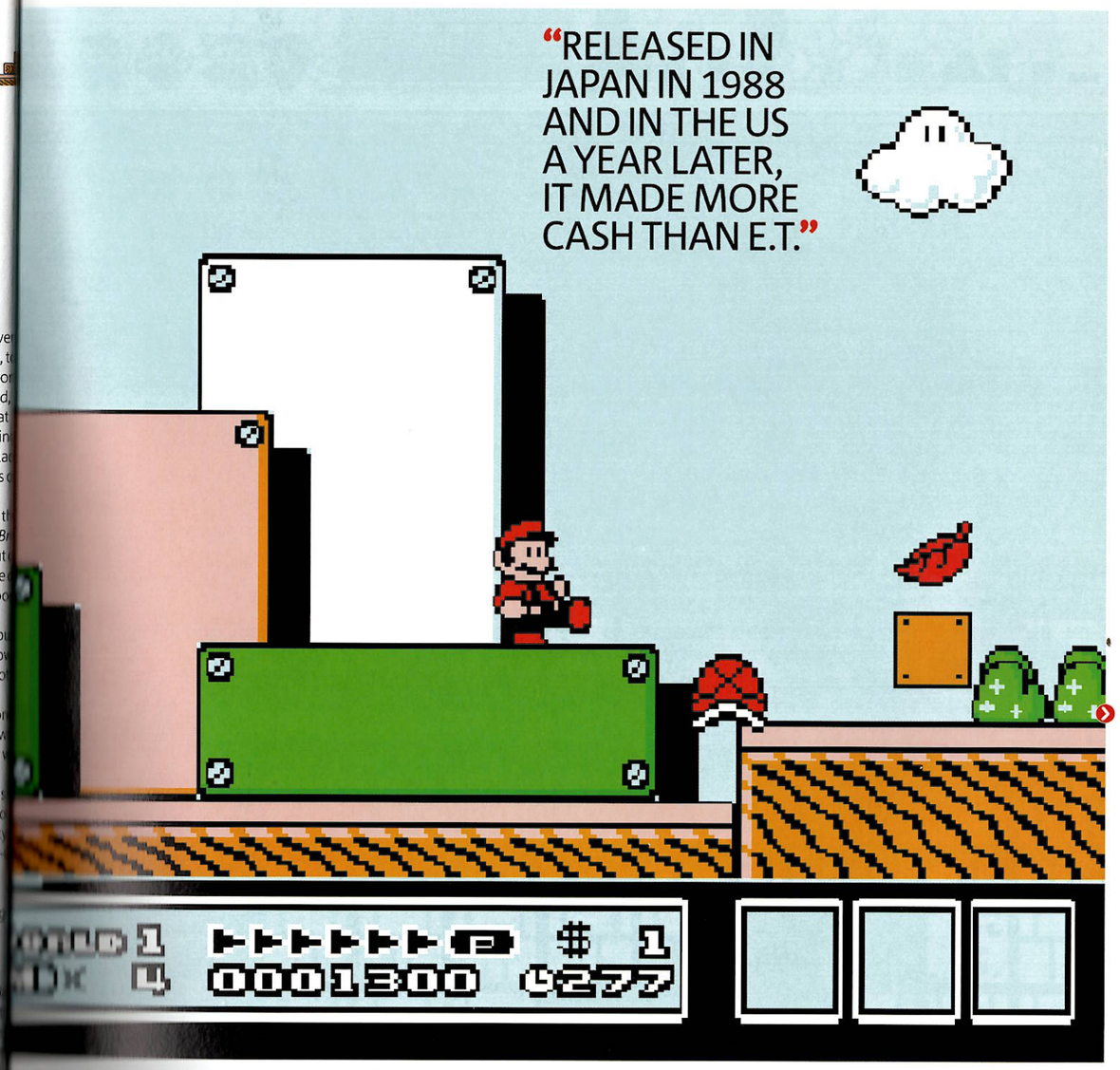


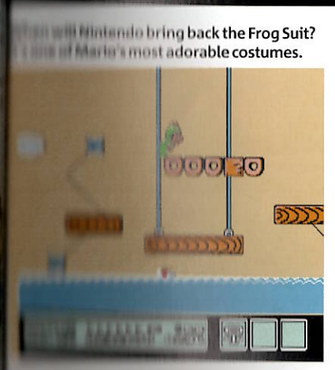
PLAY IT NOW

Super Mario Bros. 3 is available on Virtual Console on Wii, Wii U and 3DS. You can download it now for hot raccoon action.



"RELEASED IN JAPAN IN 1988 AND IN THE US A YEAR LATER, IT MADE MORE CASH THAN E.T."





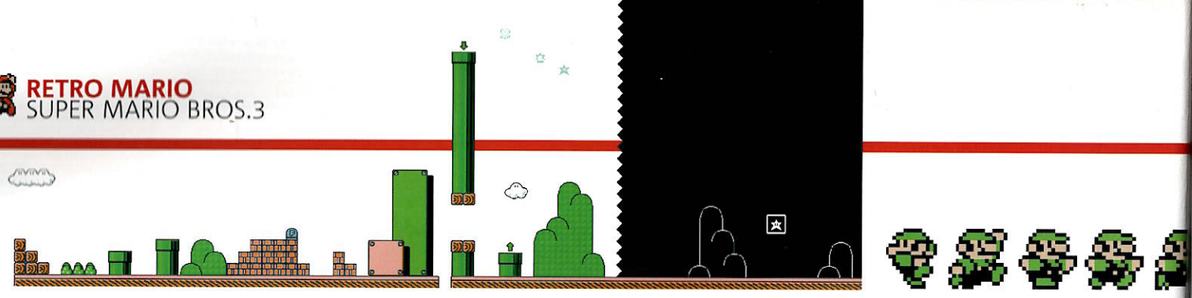
Will Nintendo bring back the Frog Suit? It's one of Mario's most adorable costumes.

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

KOOPALINGS
Bowser's brood appear for the first time in *SMB3*, and each one is a tough cookie with their own airship to hold you off. Show 'em what for.

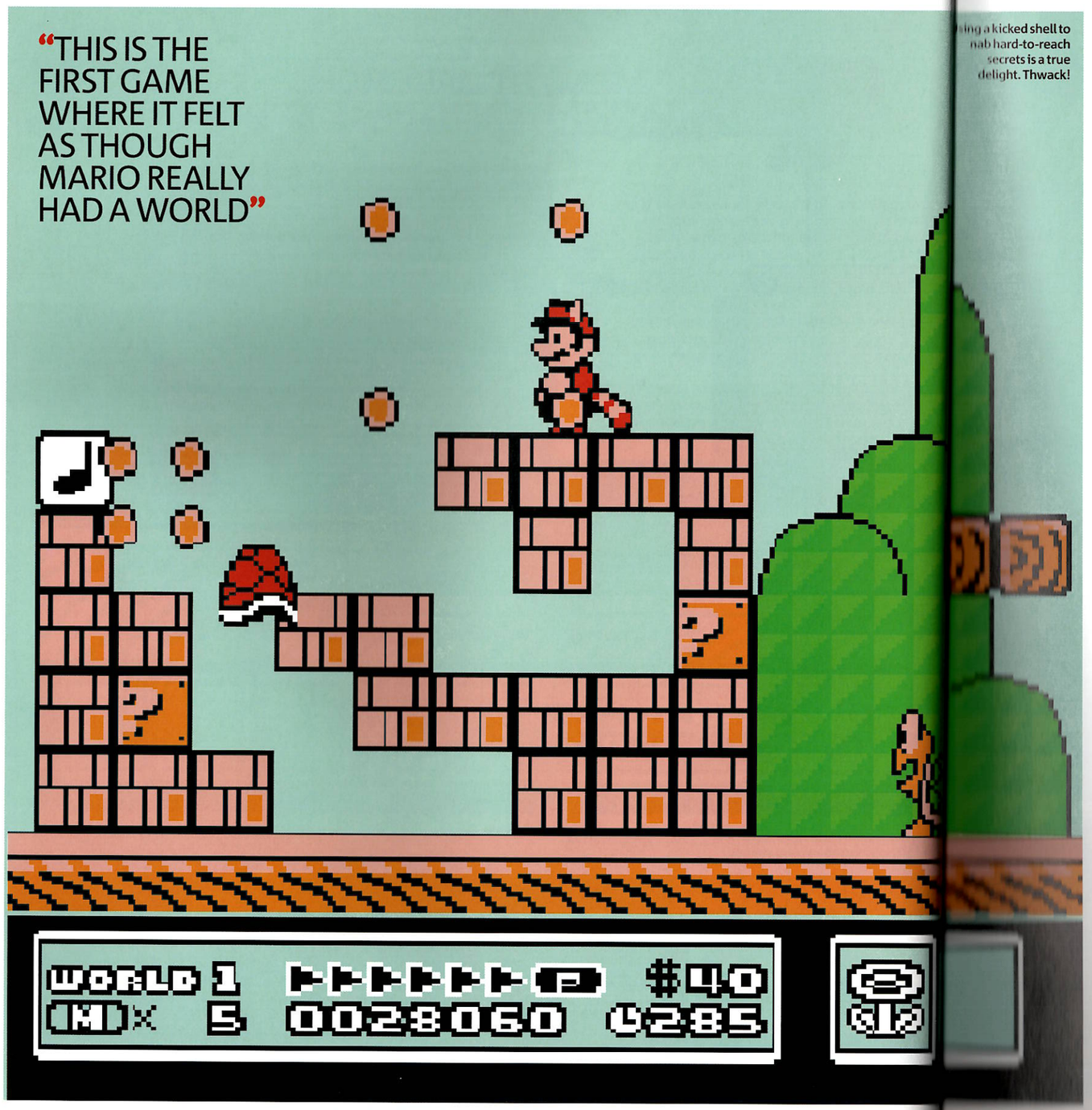
BOWSER'S ARMADA
You didn't think it would be easy, did you? The final world of *SMB3* is a relentless assault course, as Mario bounds across an entire army.

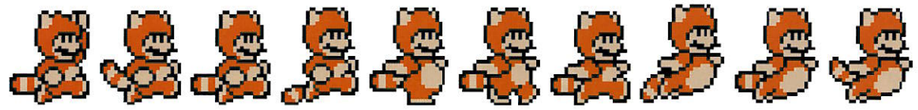
THE WHISTLE
Everyone knows how to get this, but that doesn't stop it being a thrill. Get a warp whistles in World 1 and you can skip straight to World 8. Yay!



"THIS IS THE FIRST GAME WHERE IT FELT AS THOUGH MARIO REALLY HAD A WORLD"

ing a kicked shell to nab hard-to-reach secrets is a true delight. Thwack!

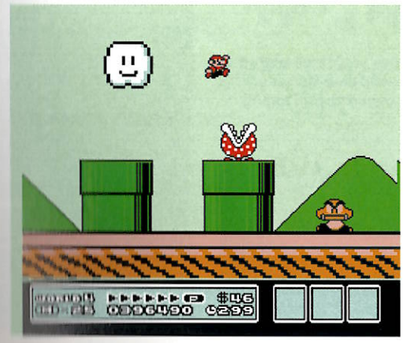




Do raccoons like water? Either way, Mario's furry alter ego certainly does.

power-up prize. Its sequel may have the name, but this is the first game where it genuinely felt as though Mario had a world.

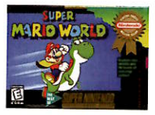
What a place it is. We're all so familiar with Mario's universe that its surreal side almost seems normal by now: the mushrooms that balloon him up in size, the anthropomorphic clouds and hills that silently watch the spectacle unfold, an army of big-eyed monsters as cute as they are deadly. *Super Mario Bros. 3* introduced a variety and verve into the rogue's gallery that has informed the series ever since: the Chain Chomps, barking balls with teeth that strain at their leash to get you; an Angry Sun that gees itself up before swooping down to burn you; the Boss Bass and Big Bertha, fat fish that leap out of the water to try and swallow Mario whole; Para-Beetles, flying koopas that Mario can hitch a ride on; Jelectrocs, glowing electric jellyfish that don't move, but wait for a careless swimmer to misjudge their momentum; Paragoombas, Micro-goombas, Fire Snakes and Fire Chomps – the list is long.



PIPE DOWN, PIPE BOY

It's a world of imagination and magic like nothing before and few since. It's a game that starts off gently and soon ramps up into not only a huge test of skill, but a challenge to the imagination. Just how curious are you? The secrets are out there, waiting to be discovered, but only if you want to find them. It's a game that can be played in so many ways, but the genius is that at the very end, it's still Mario and a princess that needs rescuing.

Of course that's what you'll do – eventually. And then, with Bowser vanquished and Peach saved – what happens; what then? The curtain falls. Of course it does. But what a show. +



FORMAT SNES OUT APRIL 1992 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario World

A whole new wooooooooorld! A new fantastic point of vieeeeeeeew!

WHAT IS IT

The first 16-bit Mario adventure introduced the world to Yoshi, Mario's greedy green sidekick.

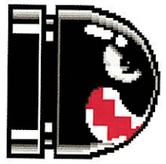
Super Mario World set its stall out on the very first level. The brand-new SNES was barely out of its box, the smell of freshly-dishevelled Styrofoam still wafting through the air, and already the TV screen was pinging king-sized Bullet Bills at Mario's bonce at quite an alarming rate of knots. *Mario World*'s opening gambit sent out a crystal clear message to the gaming universe: the next generation of Nintendo hardware had arrived, and it was capable of delivering a bolder, brighter and better Mario game than we could possibly have dreamed of.

SNES: home of the nicest eject button ever made. Go on, give it a big old thump. Klunk! Heaven.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Free of the harsh technical constraints of the clunky old NES system, Shigeru Miyamoto and his team were able to deliver us the Mario game that they'd always wanted to create, and boy, did *Super Mario World* ever catch them in a giving mood. Dinosaur Land played host to the biggest 2D Mario game to date, with a then-massive 96 different levels spread out across a sprawling landscape that took in such wondrous sights as underground caverns, hazardous mountain ranges and even, should the player dig deep enough to find the means to get there, the stars above.

But more impressive even than the sheer scale of the world was the fiendishly devious way in which Nintendo layered it. Mario games had toyed with the idea of secret exits before (most notably with the W Zones in *Bros. 1*), but never quite to this extent. The were more than 20 fiendishly tricky secret exits loc away around the game's fabulous-looking environ (signified on the iconic world map as a little red dot and some of the hoops the game designers made y jump through to find them were enough to have yo tearing your moustache out.



UNDER THE BRIDGE

Everyone had their own favourite secret exit. Some required you to reunite a key with its hole. Others asked you to come back later after you'd activated of the four Switch Palaces, which transformed hollowed-out silhouettes into tangible blocks, that turn allowed Mazza to trample his way to previous un-plumbed territory. Others required you to think outside the box. The most famous example is the Cheese Bridge Area's secret exit. It didn't matter ho many pipes you stuck your head down, no hidden passageways would ever reveal themselves.

The only thing out of the ordinary was a tiny, soli arrow beyond the end-of-level marker, suggesting shenanigans were afoot. What to do? The answer w to dive under the finish line with the cape, and time your ascent at the right moment to propel you past ticker tape without setting it off. Or you could sacri a Yoshi by hopping off his back just as he's about to into the abyss... unkind, but then life is cruel.

Hey, you'd look angry if a weird dino-thing stuck his tongue on your tummy.

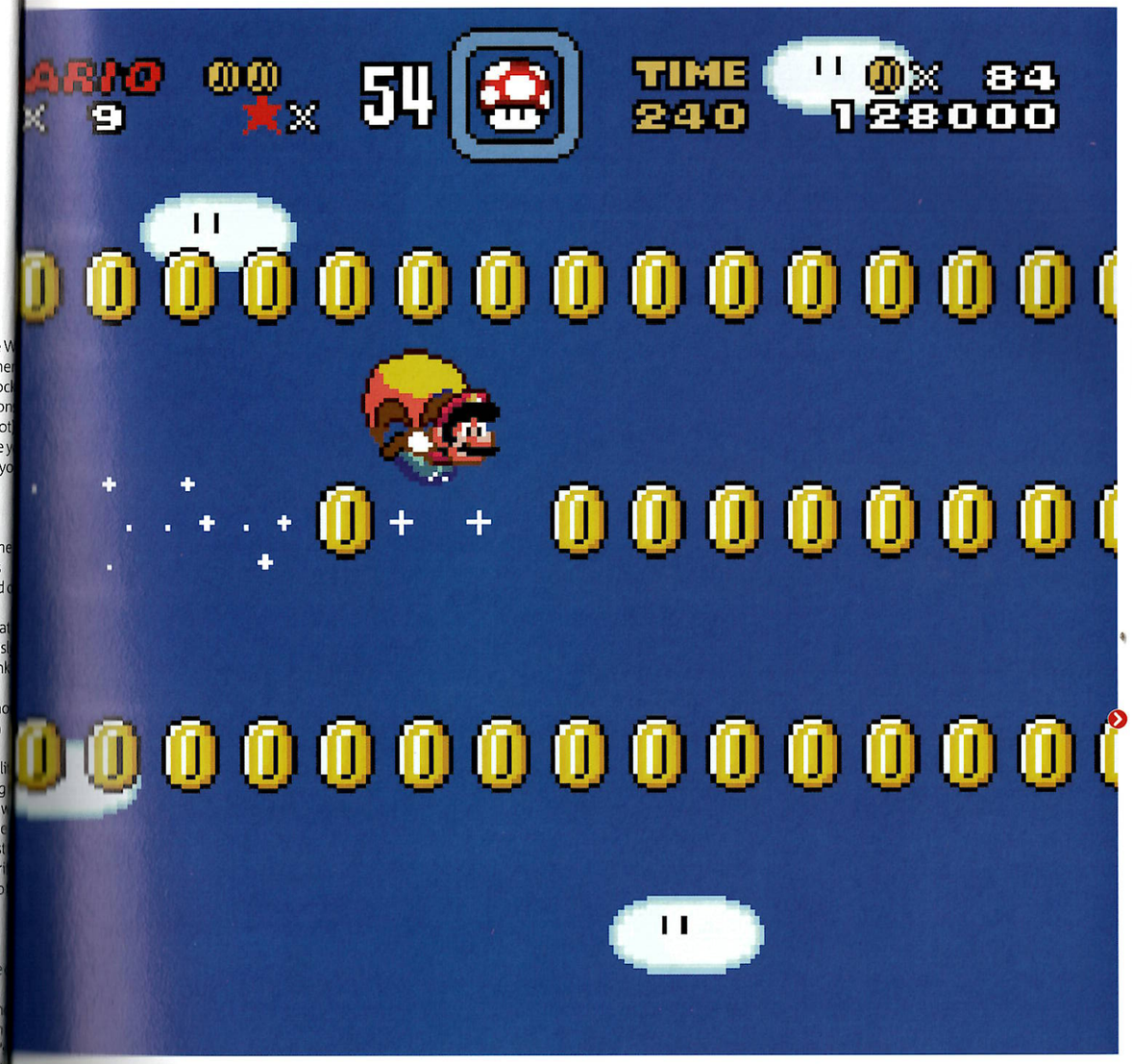
SOAR 'N' SAUR

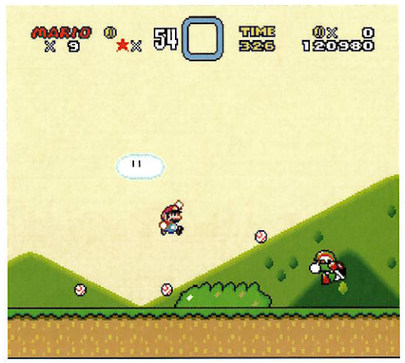
Such creative possibilities were made real by some the most versatile power-ups ever seen in a Mario game. The magical cape (making its only appearan to date) remains one of the most revered powers in entire Marioverse. Experts could harness the cape' flying powers to travel more or less anywhere. Wit practice, many levels could be skipped in their enti but one false move would usually end with a de-ca Mario hurtling towards a bottomless pit.

The debuting Yoshi was also an instant classic – the moment you first mounted your eggy steed wi satisfying 'pvvt-poom' and the background music spontaneously remixed into a bassier version of its you knew only good things were about to happen. atop a Yoshi in *Mario World* was a charmed one. Although he had yet to learn his cheaty mid-air flut

PLAY IT NOW

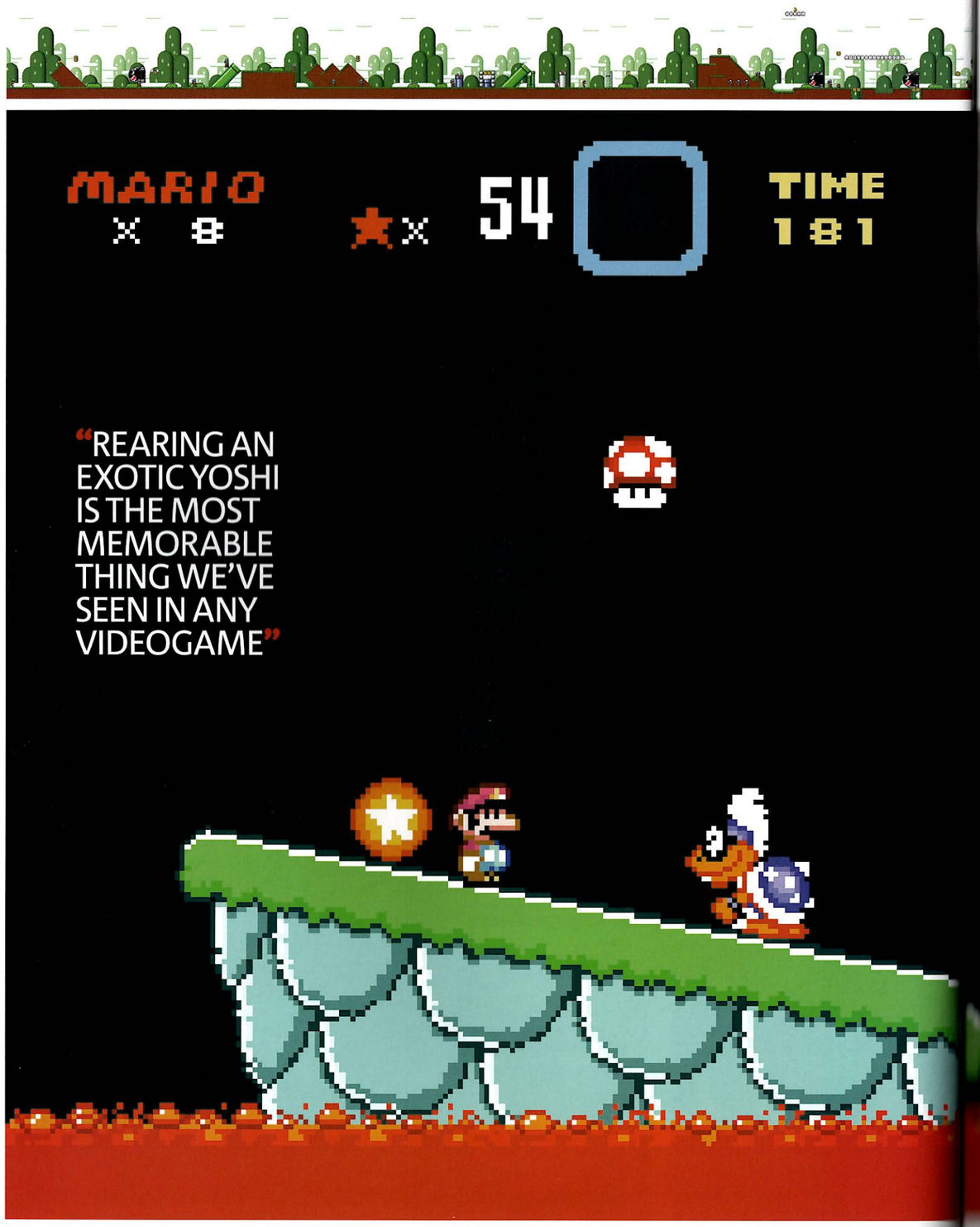
Super Mario World is available on Virtual Console on Wii, and Wii U. Gobble it up like a Yoshi going to town on a berry.

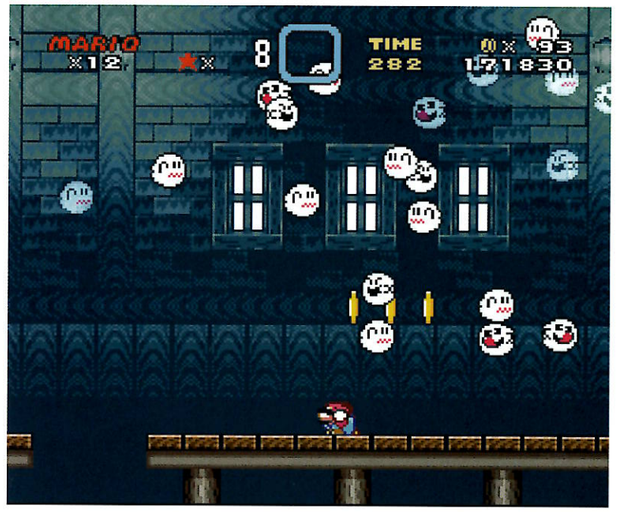




"A BOLDER, BRIGHTER AND BETTER MARIO GAME THAN WE COULD POSSIBLY HAVE DREAMED OF"

Chargin' Chucks are one of the oddest foes, such is their love of American sports goods. They reappear in *Super Mario 3D World*.





The music in the Ghost Houses still gives us the chills. How it was squezed from a SNES sound chip we'll never know. Brrrrrrr.

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

CASTLE KA-BOOM
It's not enough for Mario to just evict a Koopa Kid from his Castle of Oppression, oh no: Mario has to blow the thing to smithereens.

YOSHI REARING
Insert five baddies into this little yapper's trap and he'll instantly sprout into a full-sized Yoshi for dino-riding joy!

STAR WORLD
Five secret exits lead to this mystical world of multi-coloured Yoshis. One of the Star Warps will dump you right outside Bowser's mansion!

he could gobble up baddies with gusto and safely stomp on an array of hazards that would otherwise render Mario an ex-plumber (including a gaggle of sentient chainsaws – just what are Yoshi's boots made of?). You could even harness differently-coloured Koopa shells for a range of effects.

Wolf down a red shell and Yoshi would spit out three red flames (with little eyeballs on them, of course), while blue shells would temporarily gift the Green Gobblin' a pair of tiny wings. Yoshis also play host to *Mario World*'s most magical moment. You can forget *BioShock*'s ending, you can shove your Metal Gear Solid plot twists; rearing an exotic breed of Yoshi remains the most memorable thing we've ever seen in any videogame, ever.

Super Mario World wasn't about technical showboating. *Donkey Kong Country* had by far the better graphics, and Yoshi's Island a more distinctive visual style. It didn't even make particularly good use of the SNES's Mode 7 capabilities, which were very much the flavour of the day (although when it did use it, it was typically breathtaking – watching Bowser's Clown-Copter zoom into the entire screen as he moved in for the kill was dungaree-filling stuff). But what it did do was give us, for the first time, a Mario game that wasn't rubbing up against the edges of the hardware that hosted it. It was technically comfortable, but there was nothing conservative about the design.

It was an innovator among Mario games, but also amid platform games in general. It proved that platformers could get across the same sense of intrigue, wonderment and discovery as an adventure game the like of Zelda, say.

Instead of push-scrolling you towards a goal like its predecessors, *Super Mario World* encouraged you to scour every nook and cranny for hidden secrets. That it did so while keeping the same watertight design as the more linear Marios makes this one of Miyamoto's greatest triumphs. Almost a true puzzle-platformer, *Super Mario World* is practically perfect. So near perfect, in fact, that Nintendo has never felt the need to revisit its adventurous template. As the pinnacle of traditional 2D Mario-dom, *Super Mario World* had said everything they had left to say. ✚

3
www.pegi.info

TURN YOUR WORLD UPSIDE DOWN!

MARIO KART™ 8

© 2014 Nintendo. Wii U is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2014 Nintendo.

MARIO KART™ 8 IS COMING TO Wii U™:

GO FOR GOLD IN GLORIOUS **HD**!

SPEED ACROSS WALLS AND CEILINGS IN **ANTI-GRAVITY** MODE!

MASTER **NEW COURSES** AND **REMASTERED CLASSICS**!

FAVOURITE RACES AND **NEW DRIVERS** HIT THE TRACK.

UNLEASH **NEW ITEMS** AND CLAIM VICTORY!

CHOOSE YOUR PERFECT PACK:

LIMITED EDITION
Wii U Game Disc
+ Spiny Shell
Collector's item

STANDARD EDITION

Nintendo
Nintendo UK Online Store

/WiiU.co.uk • @NintendoUK • YouTube/NintendoWiiUUK • #MK8

Nintendo
mariokart.co.uk

Wii U™

The 25 Greatest Power-Ups

If one thing defines Mario, it's the power-up – after all, Super Mario Bros. more or less invented it. Mario may be an everyman in other respects, but when it comes to taking on enemies he can turn into anything from a frog to a statue to a superman. The big question, of course, is which are the best? Here's our definitive guide to the best 25 power-ups from nearly 30 years of adventuring...

SPRING MUSHROOM

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO GALAXY

WHAT IT DOES TURNS MARIO INTO A HUMAN SPRING

One of *Galaxy*'s most divisive power-ups, but what's great about Spring Mario is that he actually feels like a coiled spring: powerful, unpredictable and likely to boooooiinnng off in any direction. Squeezing the button to squeeze the springs together just before launch is brilliant, and it briefly turns *Galaxy* into a game about bouncing rather than jumping.

GOLDEN MUSHROOM

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO KART 64

WHAT IT DOES UNLIMITED BOOSTS FOR LIMITED TIME

The boost mushrooms in *Super Mario Kart 64* are all well and good, but what a racer really wants is unlimited use of them for those tricky moments when they're lagging behind: lo, the Golden Mushroom. This baby is seriously hot stuff, and using it at the right time on a final lap makes all the difference between first and nowhere – it's the very essence of Mario Kart.

P-BALLOON

AS SEEN IN
SUPER MARIO WORLD

WHAT IT DOES
INFLATES MARIO INTO A BIG BALLOON

The only power-up to play on Mario's generous girth, the P-Balloon inflates our portly plumber into a mini-blimp. *SMW* is packed with locations that take advantage of balloon Mario's delicate upwards rise, and the most delicious touch is Mario's in-out deflation for the few seconds before he returns to normal: the few seconds that you have to find somewhere to land...

BOULDER MARIO

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

WHAT IT DOES TURNS MARIO INTO A LUMP OF ROCK

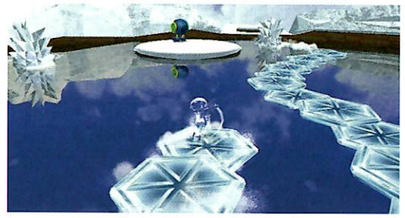
Mario gets rocky and fast when he picks up a Stone mushroom, gaining the ability to roll at super speed into enemies and over obstacles, scattering any moveable object like matchwood. But it's the combination of this with *Galaxy*'s mind-messing notions of perspective and rotund planetoids that makes it such fun to freewheel as a massive boulder.

ICE MARIO

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO GALAXY 1 & 2,

WHAT IT DOES TURNS MARIO'S BODY INTO ICE

Perhaps the most graceful of Mario's many alternate forms, Ice Mario's greatest ability is easy: skating. A simple flick of the Wii Remote sets Mario off in a perfect rhythm across any slidey surface and, best of all, he can even use this ability to freeze over the top of even the most burny lava. A fantastic idea that's beautiful in the hands.

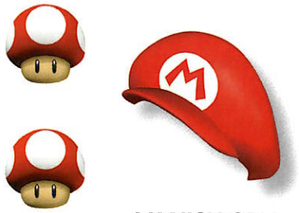


HELICOPTER HAT

AS SEEN IN
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

WHAT IT DOES
A MINIATURE HELICOPTER ON MARIO'S HEAD

So many of Mario's finest abilities involve flying, and *NSMB Wii* offers a twist: hovering. It's always nice to have a safety net when your dumb friends are falling into every gap available, but *NSMB Wii* is also full of nooks and crannies with coins and bonus power-ups that the HeliHat is just perfect for squeezing up and into.



VANISH CAP

AS SEEN IN
SUPER MARIO 64
WHAT IT DOES
TURNS MARIO INVISIBLE AND LETS HIM PASS THROUGH SURFACES

A simple idea: Vanish Mario is invisible and incorporeal, meaning he can pass by enemies and walk through previously rock solid chunks of ice, cages and even a few select walls. The nicest touch, though, is that he can combine this with the Metal Cap to become a practically unstoppable and invisible metal man! Tasty result!

KURIBO'S SHOE

AS SEEN IN
SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
WHAT IT DOES
LETS MARIO HOP ALONG AND OVER PREVIOUSLY DEADLY SURFACES

Mario in a boot: how cute! The best Mario power-ups are those that make a previous impossibility seem all too easy, and in *SMB3* there are frequent rows of snappy flowers that make your life a constant hell. Not so this boot – its tough sole lets you hop across these surfaces and deal mega damage to enemies, all while looking adorable.

TANOOKI

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
WHAT IT DOES LETS MARIO FLY OR TURN INTO A STATUE

The Tanooki Suit is a favourite of many, but too much of a rarity to be one of Mario's best power-ups. It lets him fly for a bit, but also has the mystifying ability to turn him into a statue. Enemies will pass him by, but there doesn't seem to be much use for it in *SMB3*. Both a loose end and fun for fun's sake, but bagging the Tanooki is still one of *SMB3*'s most exciting moments.

MEGA MUSHROOM

AS SEEN IN NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.
WHAT IT DOES MAKES MARIO SCREEN-FILLINGLY HU

When a Super Mushroom's size increase just won't the trick, you need a Mega Mushroom. Where Ma[illegible] power-ups are usually subtle and have multiple us[illegible]asion you pick one (or even three!) up is a cause for this one just lets rip – turning the normally affab[illegible]ebration. Firing this baby at a kart in front means plumber into a screen-high Godzilla version of him[illegible]t they are going to be spinning out very soon, and who charges relentlessly forwards, volleying pipes [illegible] wicked inevitability of it all after you've pushed the Goombas like there's no tomorrow. button is one of gaming's great pleasures.

RED SHELL

AS SEEN IN EVERY MARIO KART TO DATE
WHAT IT DOES HOMING MISSILE

[illegible] red shell is not the most glamorous of Mario Kart's [illegible]s, but by gum does it get the job done, and every [illegible] one (or even three!) up is a cause for [illegible]ed inevitability of it all after you've pushed the button is one of gaming's great pleasures.

BOO SUIT

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO GALAXY
WHAT IT DOES ALLOWS MARIO TO WALK WITH THE DEAD

Mario's trip to a haunted mansion in *Super Mario Galaxy* defies expectation by allowing our plumber to turn phantom and hide amongst the cackling ghosties. Usually you have to keep an eye on Boos to stop them dead in their tracks, but here it's you the ghosts need to spy on as you work your way to freeing a terrified Luigi. Of course, scaring your brother is an added bonus.

PENGUIN MARIO

AS SEEN IN NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii
WHAT IT DOES A FULL-ON PENGUIN OUTFIT THAT CAN FREEZE BADDIES AND BELLYSLIDE

A tribute to *SMB3*'s animal-based costumes, the Penguin Suit brought together *NSMB*'s blue shell and the classic Fire Flower before adding a freezing twist: throw snowballs and enemies turn into ice blocks, or throw yourself on the ground to slide along on a slick penguin tum. It's a 2-for-1 deal with utility and style.

CLOUD MARIO

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2
WHAT IT DOES GIVES MARIO ABILITY TO CREATE CL[illegible]

This is why Mario's power-ups are so good: in a [illegible] about jumping, who else would give you three [illegible] nets? You'll find that Cloud Mario's challenges [illegible] little more complex than that would suggest, of [illegible] but it's the very fact you can play around with [illegible] abilities so much in *Galaxy 2*'s otherwise unforg[illegible] depths that make it an awesome toy.

FROG SUIT

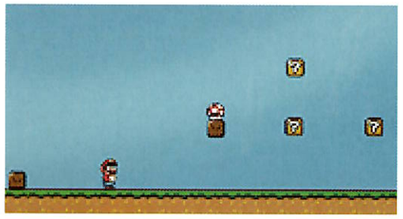
AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
WHAT IT DOES MAKES MARIO AMPHIBIOUS

[illegible] you might wonder what the fuss is about: [illegible] Frog Suit lets Mario jump higher, it's true, but it also makes him hop slowly along. But in water, there's [illegible] better. Mario's bobbing motion is replaced [illegible] fast strokes in exactly the direction you [illegible] currents are nullified, and those squid can't [illegible] you. Makes life better, down where it's wetter.

SUPER MUSHROOM

AS SEEN IN EVERY MARIO GAME EVER
WHAT IT DOES MAKES MARIO SUPER!

The Super Mushroom turns diddy ickle Mario into the twice-as-big-and-deadly Super Mario. In later games like *Super Mario World* it also enables new abilities like the spin jump, but the core of the 'shroom lies in two things: it lets Mario absorb one hit from an enemy – not to be underestimated – and it lets him further upgrade his powers. It's one of Mario's most reliable helpers.



FIRE FLOWER

AS SEEN IN
SUPER MARIO BROS., SMB3, SMW, NSMB, SMG, NSMB WII, SMG2
WHAT IT DOES
MARIO SHOOTS FIREBALLS FROM HIS HANDS

Mario usually dispatches his enemies by jumping on their heads: an incredibly satisfying interaction, but one that leaves him open to counterattack. The pyrotechnics of the fire flower are obvious, but its key ability is even simpler and more deadly: ranged attacks.

No longer will Hammer Bros. throw their tools and laugh from a distance. No longer do Piranha Plants relentlessly chomp up and down in their pipes. For Mario, the power of fire means control. It's not as simple as that, of course: judging the bounces of his arcing gobs of flame is a new challenge, as is aiming at a Koopa while jumping over a gaping pit. Still, talk about a game-changer...

SUPER LEAF/ POWER WING

AS SEEN IN
SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
WHAT IT DOES
THE POWER OF FLIGHT, AND A WHACKING GREAT TAIL

Its abilities go beyond mere flight: hammering at the jump button wags Mario's tail, slowing his descent and giving just enough airtime to avoid unhappy landings. On the ground it cracks open sealed routes. Raccoon Mario has the abilities for a grand adventure, but it's also the key to exploring *SMB3*'s intricate world.

SUPER BELL

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD
WHAT IT DOES TURNS MARIO INTO A CAT

When *3D World*'s original trailer opened with a helium "meow meow!" we knew we were in for something strange. The bell sees Mario cosplay as a moggy, scratching at Goombas, pouncing in a strike and climbing any vertical surface. It's this latter ability that is so transformative, freeing Mario from the ground and allowing a world of secrets to be hidden above.

WING CAP

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO 64
WHAT IT DOES LETS MARIO FLY

With the leap to 3D came open skies like never bef
The Wing Cap is the starting point for the best airb
time attacks and skill challenges that Miyamoto an
team could dream up. A balancing act between co
and freedom, Mario is carried on thermals and co
into dives, with wonky early flights leading to mid
twists and upwards whooshes that make it so spe

STARMAN

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO BROS. SERIES
WHAT IT DOES MAKES MARIO INVINCIBLE

ell, you can't argue with invincibility – it's always a
eful attribute, whatever the situation. Finding a
man in a level is hitting the jackpot: Mario can tear
ough anything in his path, and even execute nifty
ner-saults while jumping, pausing for nothing that
Bowser's motley army can chuck at him.
That's one side of it: the other is its difficulty. For it
esn't just make Mario unbreakable, but demands
ou use it thoughtfully. For a power-up that grants
ny ability it results in a lot of deaths. That twist of the
knife is its greatness: absolute power, and the
irresistible temptation to push yourself too far.

CAPE

AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO WORLD
WHAT IT DOES LETS MARIO FLY, GLIDE AND SPIN

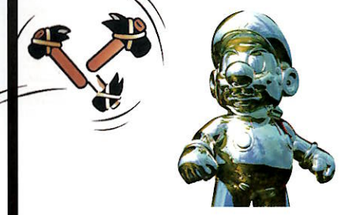
The theme among Mario's greatest power-ups is flight, and the cape is its most beautiful, and simple, expression. Its first stages are largely the same as the Raccoon or Tanooki suit – dashing to build up enough momentum to launch, and then soaring into the stratosphere. It's when you're coming back down that the gentle genius of this power-up shows. The Cape is also a parachute and a bomb. Grabbing each of the four corners, Mario can billow it out to slow his descent, your prods of left and right changing his angle and the speed of the fall – or you can nosedive towards the ground and land with a smash, incapacitating any nearby enemies.

And then it's a hang-glider. Alternating between parachute and dive bomb lets Mario build up enough momentum to stay airborne forever – but this requires considerable skill. It's a tool and transformation of awesome power that demands constant management and mid-air tweaking to maximise. The balance of soaring and falling is near-perfect, and its ubiquity in *SMW* means there's always a chance to practice and use it in different environments: you'll be delighted to discover that it works in every single one. The first time you take off is magical, when you learn how it works it's incredible. Among gaming's finest power-ups, it's the most refined, fun, and endlessly rewarding.

HAMMER SUIT

AS SEEN IN
SUPER MARIO BROS 3
WHAT IT DOES
LETS MARIO DO AN IMPRESSION OF THE HAMMER BROS.

Hammers do enough damage to knock out anything – even Bowser – in seconds. The catch? It's a glass cannon. Hammer Suit is rare, and is wiped out in one hit – it's so precious you'll keep it stowed until the right moment, then have to delicately husband it through lethal levels in the hope of reaching a boss and laying the smackdown. Scary stuff!



METAL MARIO

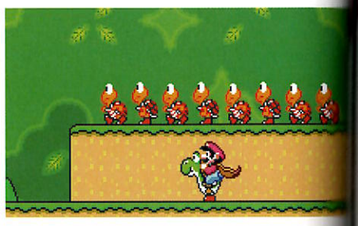
AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO 64, SUPER SMASH BROS SERIES
WHAT IT DOES TURNS MARIO'S BODY INTO METAL

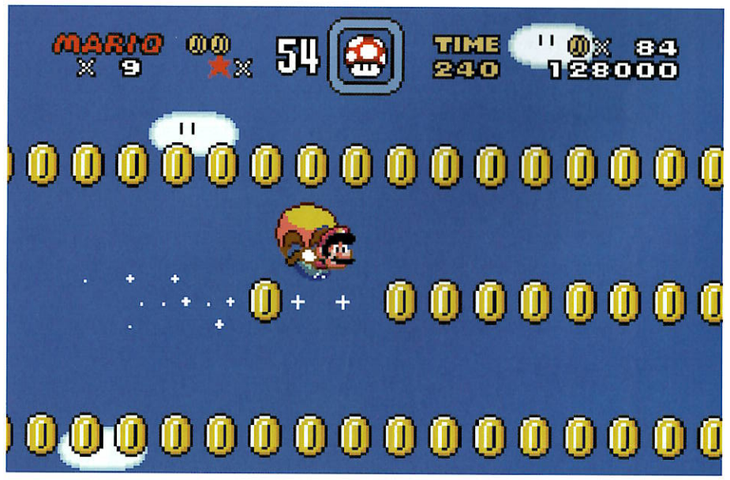
If other power-ups make Mario faster and more graceful, Metal Mario is the opposite: a clunking transformation into a heavyset powerhouse. Metal Mario's special touch is changing the physics of Mario and how he moves through *SM64*'s world: more weight means that air and water currents don't affect him, he's able to absolutely squish any enemies.

YOSHI

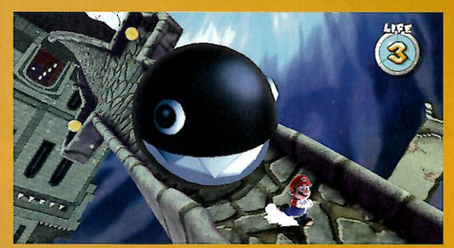
AS SEEN IN SUPER MARIO WORLD, YOSHI'S ISLA
SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE, NSMB, NSMB Wii, SM
WHAT IT DOES THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

Yoshi is a robust ride, with insides that can di
Koopas, Bullet Bills and even entire caterpillars w
missing a beat – and his unconventional dige
system rewards you every so often with a poop
power-up. He's not just a buddy, he's a one-din
that can turn a gauntlet into a cakewalk. What





42
SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Up is down, down is up and the plumber's a spring. 3D Mario's Wii debut is a gravity well of ideas, sucking in everything Nintendo ever wanted to create and spitting it all out in a new dimension dedicated to fun. We are really keen on it.



CONTENTS

3D Mario

036 MARIO 64 **040** MARIO SUNSHINE **042** MARIO GALAXY **046** MARIO GALAXY 2 **048** SUPER MARIO 3D LAND **054** SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD

FORMAT N64 OUT MARCH 1997 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario 64

Mario's face becomes a rubber plaything and makes our jaw drop

WHAT IS IT

Mario takes a brave, giant step into the third dimension, thereby setting the bar for all new 3D platformers.

The funny thing is that at the time no one particularly thought that Mario wasn't 3D. Nintendo had done such a good job of inventing parallax scrolling (see the sterling work by Shigeru Miyamoto and his team in the earlier Mario games) that the average gamer had already elevated Mario above a collection of coloured boxes. The notion that the next Mario was going to be actual proper 3D therefore shook everyone up a bit.

Doing a Mario in 3D certainly seemed the way to go, given the new Nintendo N64 console's power. But pretty soon everyone realised that there were going to be huge problems attached, too. It was hard enough timing your jumps without suddenly introducing a whole, third, into-the-screen dimension on top of everything else. And what about the camera? How are you going to be able to see how far away things are? And what about the controller itself? Accurate control of direction and momentum in three dimensions just couldn't be done with an eight-way, digital D-Pad. It all sounded like a nightmare.

Is the N64 the greatest Nintendo machine of all time? It certainly saw its fair share of genius.

DEPTH PERCEPTION

And so Miyamoto and his team had to invent the rules of 3D gaming that practically every 3D game has adopted since. First of all he had to create the notion of a camera. But where to put this camera? Miyamoto's revolution came when he placed it not to one side, but directly behind his hero. Rather than viewing Mario running left to right, the end of the game was now disappearing off into that third dimension: for the first time it was *into* the screen.

The problem is that it was quite a change around, and the team rapidly noticed in tests that the third dimension just didn't deliver the fluid, predictabl gameplay of the earlier games. Rather than beinc just to have fun, the game became a constant assessment of 3D space and loaded with decision about which button presses were required to pro at any particular moment.

Fortunately a solution was already on the way, not clear whether the N64's analogue stick or *Su Mario 64* came first, but either way it turned out t match made in heaven. This new stubby stick cou used to turn Mario around in 3D in a simple, belie manner, and control his travels from a tiny tiptoe full-on pelt – and everything in between.

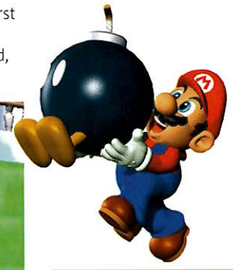
IN A SPIN

While the game had just got more complex, the playing it was easier than ever. But mindful of ga missing their D-Pads, Nintendo provided one of most fun title screens ever. You were encourage play with a startling 3D version of Mario's face w you could pull around like a naughty toddler an until he got dizzy.

But the new control system meant much mo work elsewhere. Now we needed to see Mario stealthily, running, jumping, wobbling on the e drop. In a chain reaction of innovation, we were only getting a 3D Mario, but a more alive, intere and lovable Mario, too. But that would be no go we ever saw was the back of his head. Fortunate SM64's new camera system had it all in hand.

Most of the time it just does the right thing, following Mario from behind, giving us just en an elevation to see gaps in the road ahead and t means to successfully jump them. But the new joypad had even more tricks up its sleeve.

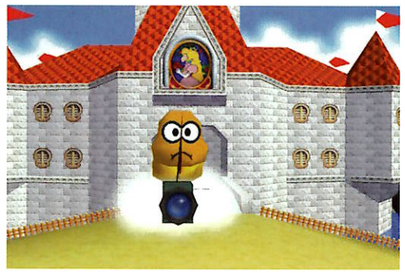
The yellow C buttons were used to flip the ca around the four compass points, and the incre Mario head-cam (engaged by pressing the righ shoulder button) pulls the camera in even clos allows you to swivel Mario's actual head – a m

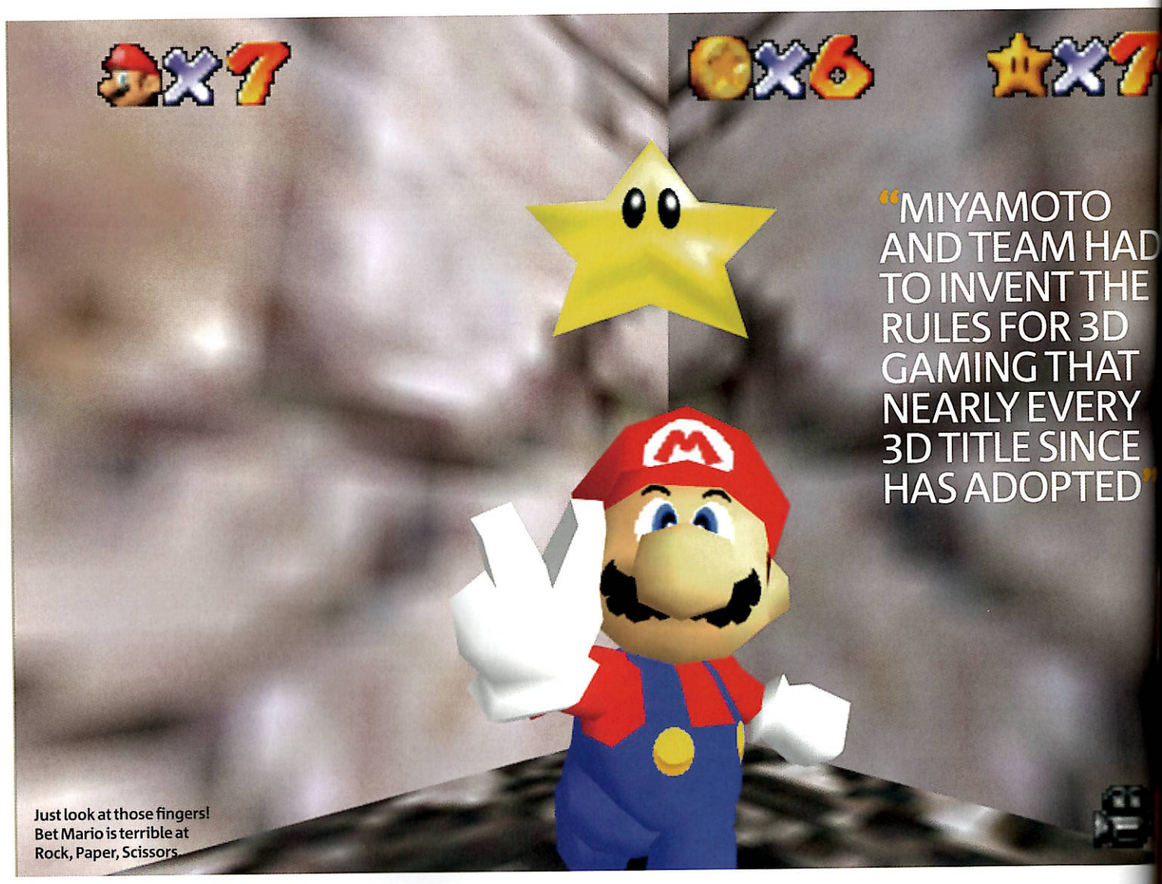


PLAY IT NOW

SM64 is available on Virtual Console on Wii. Or, if you're feeling adventurous, try the DS remake – it works on 3DS too!

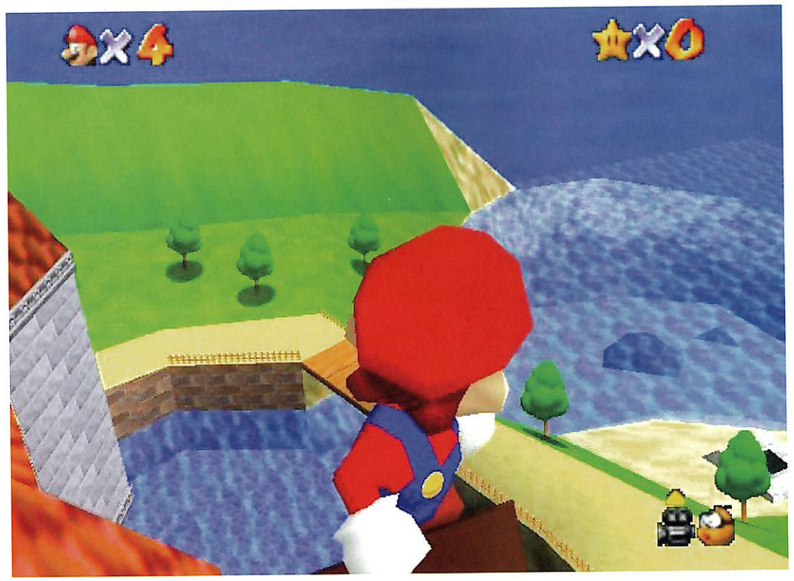
...has struggled to build a hubworld as compelling as Peach's castle and its surrounding grounds. Rosalina's Comet Observatory in *Galaxy* didn't come close.

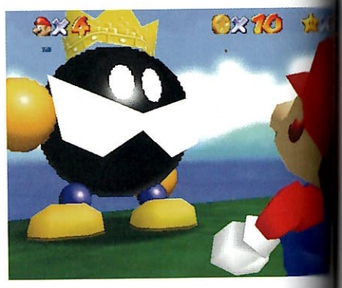




Just look at those fingers! Bet Mario is terrible at Rock, Paper, Scissors.

"MIYAMOTO AND TEAM HAD TO INVENT THE RULES FOR 3D GAMING THAT NEARLY EVERY 3D TITLE SINCE HAS ADOPTED"

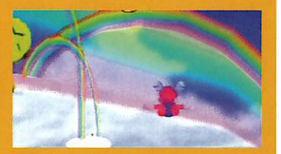




MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

FINAL MARIO
At the switch in The Cavern of the Lost Cap and green blocks reward you with a metal cap that makes Mario terminator shiny! He's also invincible. However, is that?

PENGUIN RACE
Go for the Big Penguin Race in Cool Cool Mountain and you race a big penguin down a slide. Shortcuts and stars made it one you went back to time and time again.



FLYING MARIO
The Tower of the Wing Cap level has Mario swooping through the clouds like a sparrow while trying to collect coins, and this new ability marks a dramatic change in feel and pace.

"AS A WORKING MODEL FOR HOW BEST TO CREATE A VIDEOGAME, SUPER MARIO 64 MAY NEVER BE BEATEN"

essential for gauging just how dangerous your current predicament really is.

And why just have a camera? Why not make the camera a character too? Cue the return of one of the Lakitu brothers from earlier games, who rides around after Mario on a cloud with his camera dangled before him from his fishing rod.

Move the plumber protagonist in front of a mirror (and the game is nicely populated by such things to show off the programming team's handiwork work) and you can see Lakitu floating about behind him, filming his every move.

BYTES FOR SORE EYES

With these basics in place, all Miyamoto and his crew had to do was populate the playspace afforded by the extra big 8MB card N64 cart (tiny by today's standards) with characters and predicaments. The good news was that most of that was already done, so we got 3D Koopas, Thwomps, shells, bosses, coins and castles. And on top of all that there was just space for a few more innovations before they were done.

First was the invention of game edges. With the ability to go anywhere, the game's makers didn't want players wandering off and getting lost. Or worse still, bored. So levels are very carefully fenced in. Some hills are just a little too steep to climb. An ornate wall or two prevents the player from missing the next brilliant bit around the corner.

JUST PEACHY

And while it's undeniably lots of fun to run and jump or fly around in a cannon, you just can't quite get to some places in the game – meaning that Miyamoto didn't have to go to the trouble of creating them. Call it trickery, call it genius, but the result is that you're never in doubt as to where to go next and what to do when you get there. Something that 3D open-world games struggle to implement to this day.

And who could ever forget their first time in Mario's new world? Running freely around Peach's Castle, arms outstretched, shouting "Woo-hoo!" and jumping for joy, has the average player's emotions ever matched the character on screen quite so perfectly?

Super Mario 64 continues to amaze and entertain anyone who plays it to this day. Its influence is still being felt. And as a working model for how to create a videogame it will possibly never be beaten. +

FORMAT GAMECUBE OUT OCTOBER 2002 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario Sunshine

He's walking/running/jumping/whooping/spraying on sunshine, whoa-oh!

WHAT IS IT

Mario tackles the difficult second (3D) album, armed with the world's greatest water pistol. Sploosh!

Sangria, sunburn and straw donkeys; all holidays are the same, unless of course you're a certain heroic plumber. Mario's only proper getaway since his career began turned out to be something very different indeed. Not least because immediately after touching down on the crisp white sands of the beautiful Delfino Island, our hero is banged up for engaging in a spot of wanton vandalism.

The locals (vaguely pineapple-shaped beings in hula skirts) are unmoved by his protestations of innocence and pack him off to clear up the mess. It doesn't take Professor Layton to work out that something fishy is afoot, and it would take a first-class idiot not to smell a fire-belching reptilian rat when the mess turns out to be made of living ooze. Time for Mario to take Bowser to the cleaners again. Some holiday, eh?

So begins the Mario game that fans often forget; a maligned masterpiece that was just too different for some players to handle. So what? You might think, but if you remember the GameCube you'll also remember that it was the second Nintendo console in a row to receive just one proper Mario game during its life cycle. Those hoping for another *Mario 64* were in for shock. Just as Mario was taking a holiday, so were Miyamoto and his team. Having nailed the 3D platformer during the N64 era, they used this instalment to cut loose, have a little fun and try out something new. But instead of snorkelling, they introduced a very special power-up.

APRÈS MOI, LE DELUGE

FLUDD was a technological marvel that spewed many gallons of water a second. Far from ruining the winning Mario formula (he still bounded across a 3D lands with a combination of jumps, somersaults and tri jumps) it refreshed it with a high powered jet of H The environments were daringly different too (glorious beaches, haunted hotels and tropical isl but it's Mario's new ability to spray, hover, jet and (most enabled with FLUDD attachments collected throughout) that really shook things up.

Why did GameCube have a handle? We used ours as a lunchbox: a single slice of cheese in the disc slot.

Where previously our hero was held back by gr here he could propel himself to new heights. Spot shiny stash of coins atop a nearby building? Just combine a jet of water with a handy rubberised telephone wire to spring to your prize.

SOLAR POWER

It all amounted to one of Mario's most refreshing outings yet – one that kept everything we love ab the series, and added in a few gallons of innovati good measure. So why just an apologetic two-pa retrospective sandwiched between expansive lo backs at his other greatest hits? We blame the m tough bonus stages hidden throughout Delfino

Not because they were bad, but because they too good. These fiendish toybox-themed worlds Mario separated from FLUDD and forced to rely o athleticism. These highly inventive, pulse pound sections showed how far Nintendo had come si *Mario 64*, and hinted at what a more traditional could have been.

That game was, of course, *Super Mario Gala* now it's here it's time to re-evaluate *Super Mari Sunshine*. And like all the best holidays, it had its and lows, but above all it was fun. Would we tak return trip to Delfino Island? You bet your last 1 mushroom we would. +

Mario there, spraying water all the mag. That really doesn't help, pal.

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

DINO-MITE
Yoshi made his second playable appearance here. Riding him enabled Mario access to his flutter jump, and gobbling down fruit enabled him to spew fruit juice.

A CLEAN FIGHT
The bosses in *Mario Sunshine* are among the series's best. From tougher baddies, such as the gloopy piranha plant, to the gambling ghosts, they were an absolute hoot.

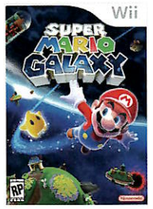
WATER WORKS
FLUDD changes the way Mari interacts with his environme can alter the trajectory of you jumps, or zoom through the s with a high-powered jet of w

The game had a gorgeous depth of field effect for a game at that time. Swoon!

"SUNSHINE HAD ITS HIGHS AND LOWS, BUT ABOVE ALL IT WAS FUN"

PLAY IT NOW

The game was only ever released on the GameCube, though its tiny disc will happily sit in the belly of the original Wii. Now's the time to dust off the old GameCube pad...



FORMAT Wii OUT NOVEMBER 2007 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD TOKYO PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario Galaxy

The Starman was waiting in the sky, he did blow our minds, and he sorted the tap, too

WHAT IS IT?

Having conquered 3D, Mario goes after the laws of gravity in this intergalactic adventure. Warning: contains giant space apples.

Having conquered Lands and Worlds, there was only one place left for Mario... the universe itself. Hopping aboard the Star Observatory – think the USS Enterprise powered by Skittles – our brave plumber left behind the Mushroom Kingdom for the final frontier. Up here, in the vast expanse of endless space, Nintendo discovered that anything goes. Hey, who needs boring stuff like logic when you've got intergalactic fishbowls, melon-spitting octopuses and a planet that is built entirely from biscuits?

Galaxy's lift-off was a long time coming. The idea was born in 2000, when Nintendo cooked up a GameCube tech demo called *Mario 128* (twice the power of *Super Mario 64*, you see). In it, an army of tiny Marios swarm a 3D orb. Alas, while *Mario 128* never made it beyond concept stage (*Sunshine* took its place on the GameCube), it was directed by Yoshikai Koizumi, who would go on to head up *Galaxy*. And it seems that Koizumi wasn't entirely ready to abandon the idea of spherical worlds...

If there was ever a game to buy a console for, it's this. A masterpiece.

HYPER SPACE

You never forget your first *Galaxy* planet. Two decades of platforming experience has instilled us with an innate fear of the platform edge. Logic says you are on top, or you are dead. In *Galaxy* there is no 'on top', however, just a constant onwards. Jump, and Mario arcs gracefully round, landing safely on the planet's underside. Take a long jump on a smaller planetoid and he enters a makeshift orbit. Round and round he goes, instantly regretting wolfing down those suspect mushrooms two minutes earlier.

Birthing planets awakened the mad scientist in Nintendo. Gravity was next on the hit list. While some planets boast a constant gravitational pull, others have less time for Newton's stuffy laws. Mario explore rooms where walls become floors and a back flip drop you onto the ceiling. Later 2D levels introdu giant arrows dictating gravity's pull. When a tripl jump flips into an upside-down back flip we don't know whether to burst into applause or clean up vomit puddle from the carpet.

But what good are spherical platforms and g if the galaxy's not worth exploring? Had Mario b dumped on some barren moon we would not be writing a gushing retrospective right now. One at the screens should reassure you that this is not case. If anything, the itty-bitty planets helped lin up Nintendo's level designers, freeing them from rigid themes that dictated past level design. Gro bored of one idea? Hop inside a warp star and M blasted to the next.

Galaxy introduced a lot to the series - not least Rosalina, who's now a fixture of the Marioverse.

Pssh, who needs a royal wedding? Play *Galaxy* to see bunting done right.

GALAXY QUEST

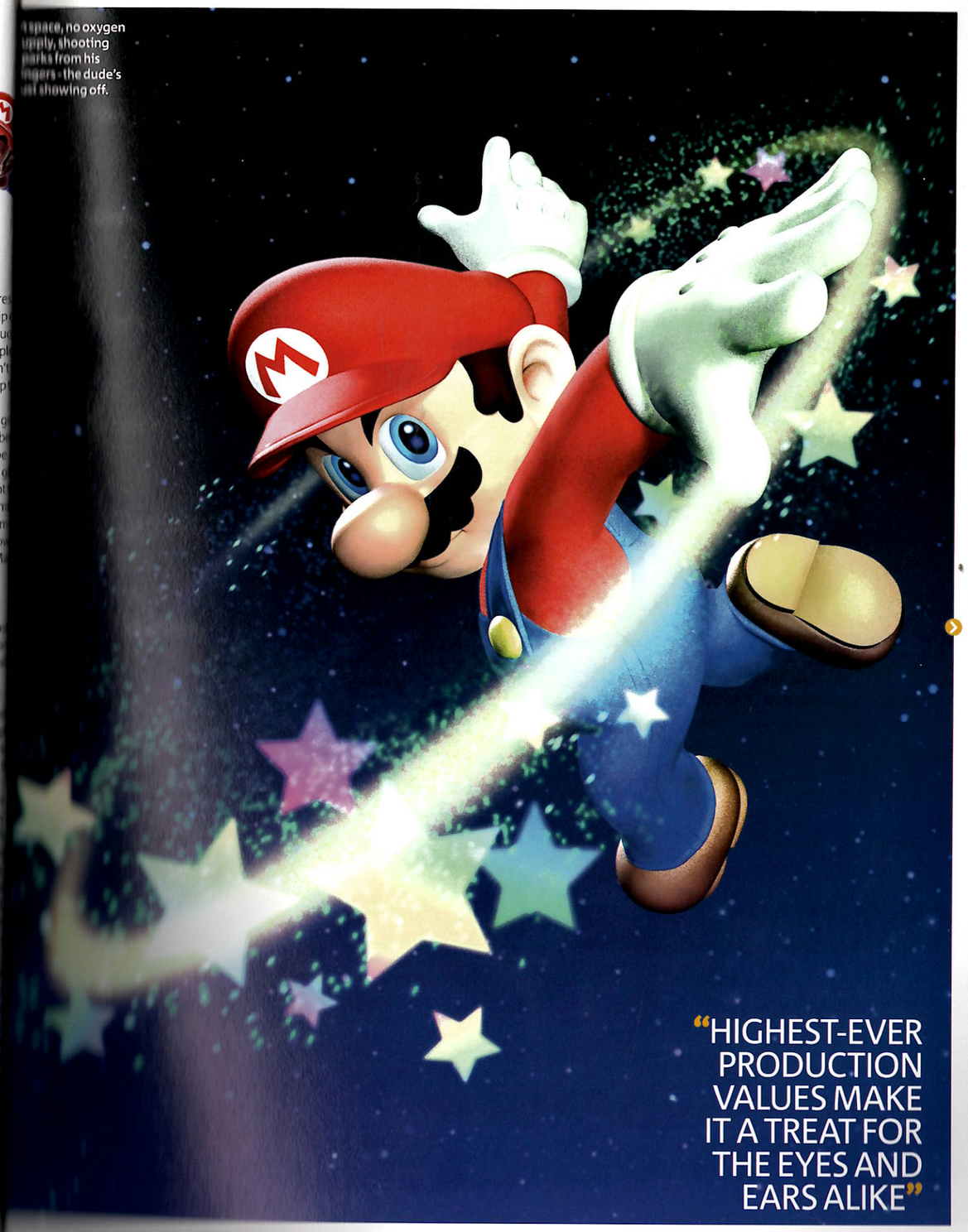
The opening Gateway Galaxy sets the tone. In ju minutes, the intrepid Italian soars between a pla eaten from the inside out by a black hole, a met – where beacons send out Goomba-disrupting shockwaves, and a clanking engine room full of switches to bop. And this is one of the duller lev Later offerings zip him between saltshakers, ap desert islands, broad beans, biscuits, tennis bal watermelons. Someone at Nintendo really like food, that's for sure.

If some stages feel like Miyamoto emptied Tesco carrier bag into space, others are driven grand, fantastical ideas. Beach Bowl Galaxy is a tank floating through space – swim to its glass and you stare out in wonder at the infinite. A le relaxing destination, Freezeflame Galaxy, mar and ice in a realm of glittering crystal donuts a oozing molten cores. At least it boasts firm gro the Matter Splatter Galaxy, Mario relies on dri matter to materialise under his feet.

Boasting the highest production values of Nintendo game to date (bar the even shinier s *Super Mario Galaxy* is a treat for the eyes and e Visually, it mines a vein of splendour no other ever found on the Wii. Shimmering waters, sw lava, glass that warps and distorts: we blame in-game deaths on beautiful distractions. And orchestral soundtrack is one of gaming's all-t greats, adding some instantly classic themes t with the spirit of adventure.

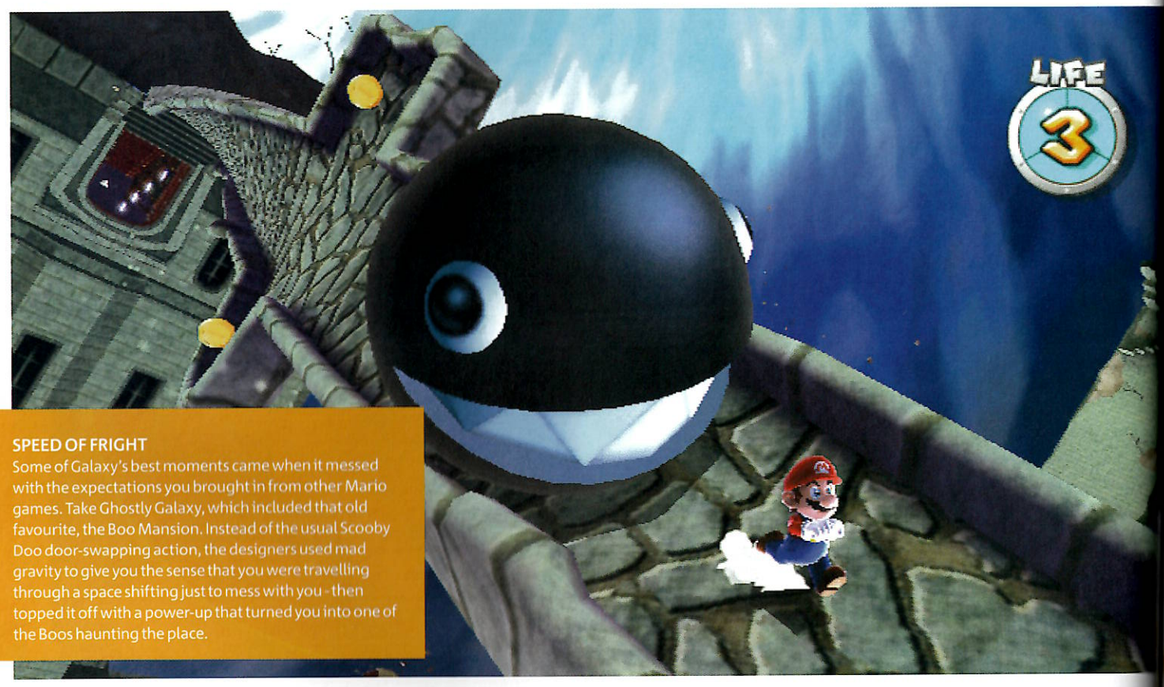
PLAY IT NOW

Super Mario Galaxy is still available from all good game stores and will happily play on your Wii U. What are you waiting for?



space, no oxygen upply, shooting parks from his ngers - the dude's ust showing off.

"HIGHEST-EVER PRODUCTION VALUES MAKE IT A TREAT FOR THE EYES AND EARS ALIKE"



SPEED OF FRIGHT
Some of Galaxy's best moments came when it messed with the expectations you brought in from other Mario games. Take Ghostly Galaxy, which included that old favourite, the Boo Mansion. Instead of the usual Scooby Doo door-swapping action, the designers used mad gravity to give you the sense that you were travelling through a space shifting just to mess with you - then topped it off with a power-up that turned you into one of the Boos haunting the place.

Wait, he's holding a star, but that's a real star behind him. Just what is going on?

"IT WAS ONE SMALL STEP FOR PLUMBERS, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR GAMINGKIND"

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

QUEEN BEE
A Queen Bee orders Mario to clean her belly of collectibles. Unlike our own leathery Queen, she's covered with fuzzy fur. We are most amused.

MUSICAL BALL
Behold, the tilty ball thing! Using the remote as a joystick, the faster you go, the faster the music plays. Floor it for a blast of musical diarrhoea.

VOLCANO
Reaching the top of Melty Molten Galaxy results in Mario taking off among star bits and hot death. If only *Dante's Peak* was this fun.

And at the heart of it all is Mario himself. Binning his Sunshine jetpack lets him return to the acrobatics that made his name. His 3D incarnation has come a long way since *Mario 64*. A newfound nimbleness enables Nintendo to throw so much more at him. Scaling a towering spire as it sinks into bubbling lava or climbing a pillar of tumbling sand is a pure platforming treat. The only problem is resisting the urge to hurl him from the top and starting the ascent afresh. With so much fun it's impossible to begrudge death in *Galaxy*.

At a time when Nintendo began to leave their hardcore roots behind – the age of *Wii Sports*, *Play* and *Fit* – *Super Mario Galaxy* reminded us what consummate game-makers they really are. We defy you to find one other game with such a confident surge of ideas. You yank Mario through star fields one second, and surf swirling sand worms the next. He launches from hurricanes, rides balls through molten tunnels, bobs along inside bubbles and somehow finds time to become a bee, ghost or spring with a simple costume change.

Most developers would kill to invent just one of these ideas. Here they exist to entertain for no more than a level. They pop into existence, blow your mind and move along to make room for the next. In an age of grim-faced space marines, sandbox murder-fests and the unstoppable reign of the war sim, *Super Mario Galaxy* was one small step for a plumber, one giant leap for gamingkind. +

FORMAT Wii OUT JUNE 2010 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD TOKYO PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario Galaxy 2

Nintendo's idea-powered rocketship goes into hyperdrive

WHAT IS IT?

Mario's second foray into space swaps apples for grapes. And this time his dino steed comes along for the ride.

Where *Super Mario Galaxy* put the first plumber in space, *Galaxy 2* saw him land comfortably on the moon and claim it in the name of Nintendo. Fans were initially a little worried to hear Nintendo announce an outright sequel (the first 3D Mario ever to do so), especially after so little time had passed. Rumours of *Super Mario Galaxy 1.5* persisted until we finally sat down and witnessed a game that bulked out, polished and outdid the original in almost every regard.

Scrapping the Star Observatory hub dumps Mario right in the action. It also kits him out with a groovy ship modelled on his own head. Superstar vanity, eh? We love *Super Mario Galaxy 2*'s impatience. You're off one level and straight into the next – you sense EAD Tokyo excitedly tugging at your sleeve, demanding to show off their next big idea. Galaxies blur into a big mass of fun: cloud buildings! Tree slides! Invisible cakes! Chain Chomp factories! Planet drilling! And so on for 120 relentless stars.

NEW DINO DIMENSION

It's not as if levels don't hold up to scrutiny. Take, for example, the addition of Yoshi – almost a new game in himself. His first proper 3D outing (you couldn't ride him in *Mario 64 DS*) sees the dino far from extinct. He flutter-jumps up tree trunks, swings like Indiana Jones with his tongue and, thanks to form-altering fruit, even competes with Mario's costume hijinks. Blimp berries inflate him and chilli sends him screaming up vertical cliff faces. It is surely a fate with which any jalfrezi enthusiast can empathise.

And for every idea looking forward, another looks back. Nostalgia is in the air. Isle Delfino's Piantas emigrate to a space beach. Tall Trunk's tree slide mimics *Mario 64*'s secret slide, right down to the music. T Supermassive Galaxy shrinks Mario for a riff on S *Mario Bros 3*'s Giant Land. All good, but no homa beats Throwback Galaxy: an entire thwomp-for- thwomp remake of *Mario 64*'s Whomp's Fortres hope Nintendo will one day get round to remaki every other stage, too.

If there's no rhyme or reason to *Super Mario* 2, it's because there's no rhyme or reason to fun Nintendo's 'Iwata Asks' series of internal intervi EAD Tokyo describe staff members taking turns contribute level ideas. If the team enjoyed it eno stayed in. This conveyor belt process is the close game development has ever come to an outrigh factory. And it shows in every last gleeful molec *Super Mario Galaxy 2*'s digital body. +

If ever there was a game that didn't need a sequel, it was *Galaxy*. If ever there was a sequel better than the original, it was *Galaxy 2*.

Any boss creature bullseye for eyes asking to be beat

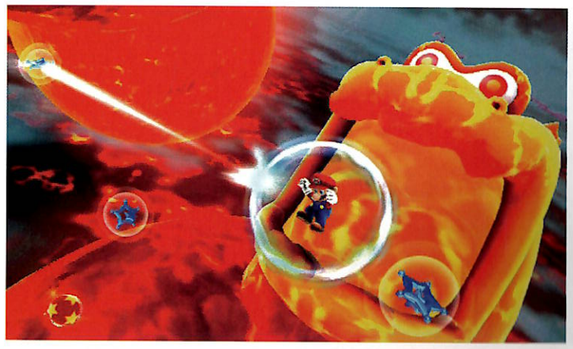
MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

DRILL MARIO
Galaxy let us see every surface, but 2 lets us see inside, too. Drill Mario is able to plough into soil planets to excavate the coin-rich centres within, or pop out the other side.

PERSPECTIVE SHIFTS
The standout visual stunt is the Clockwise Galaxy, in which a press of a button flips an entire planet on its side, forming a new platforming challenge in the process.

MARIO'S MOON
Nintendo don't just give Mario the moon on a stick, they stick Mario on the moon. While jogging around on its surface, our hero's hefty bulk accidentally rocks it out of position.

PLAY IT N
Super Mario is still availa wherever ga sold. While with the Wi it'll happily Wii U. Hurra



"IF GALAXY PUT MARIO IN SPACE, IN GALAXY 2 HE CLAIMED THE MOON FOR NINTENDO"

FORMAT NINTENDO 3DS OUT NOVEMBER 2011 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD TOKYO PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario 3D land

Mario takes the third dimension into, well, the third dimension

WHAT IS IT

Mario's first portable 3D adventure marries cutting edge stereoscopy with the ideas of yesteryear to create a platformer that absolutely anyone can enjoy.

The release of a new game in the Mario series is always one of those moments that Nintendo fans await with bated breath because they're almost always landmarks in gaming. *Super Mario Bros.* changed the platforming genre forever, *Super Mario Bros. 3* redefined it further with its world map, *Super Mario 64* introduced a new gameplay experience and the imagination applied to every square inch of the *Super Mario Galaxy* games have arguably made them the finest, most lovingly-crafted games on any system in the past five years. As the first Mario game on the 3DS, there was a lot riding on *Super Mario 3D Land* to provide yet another landmark moment, and we're happy to say that it did, though we admit: for a while we were worried it wouldn't.

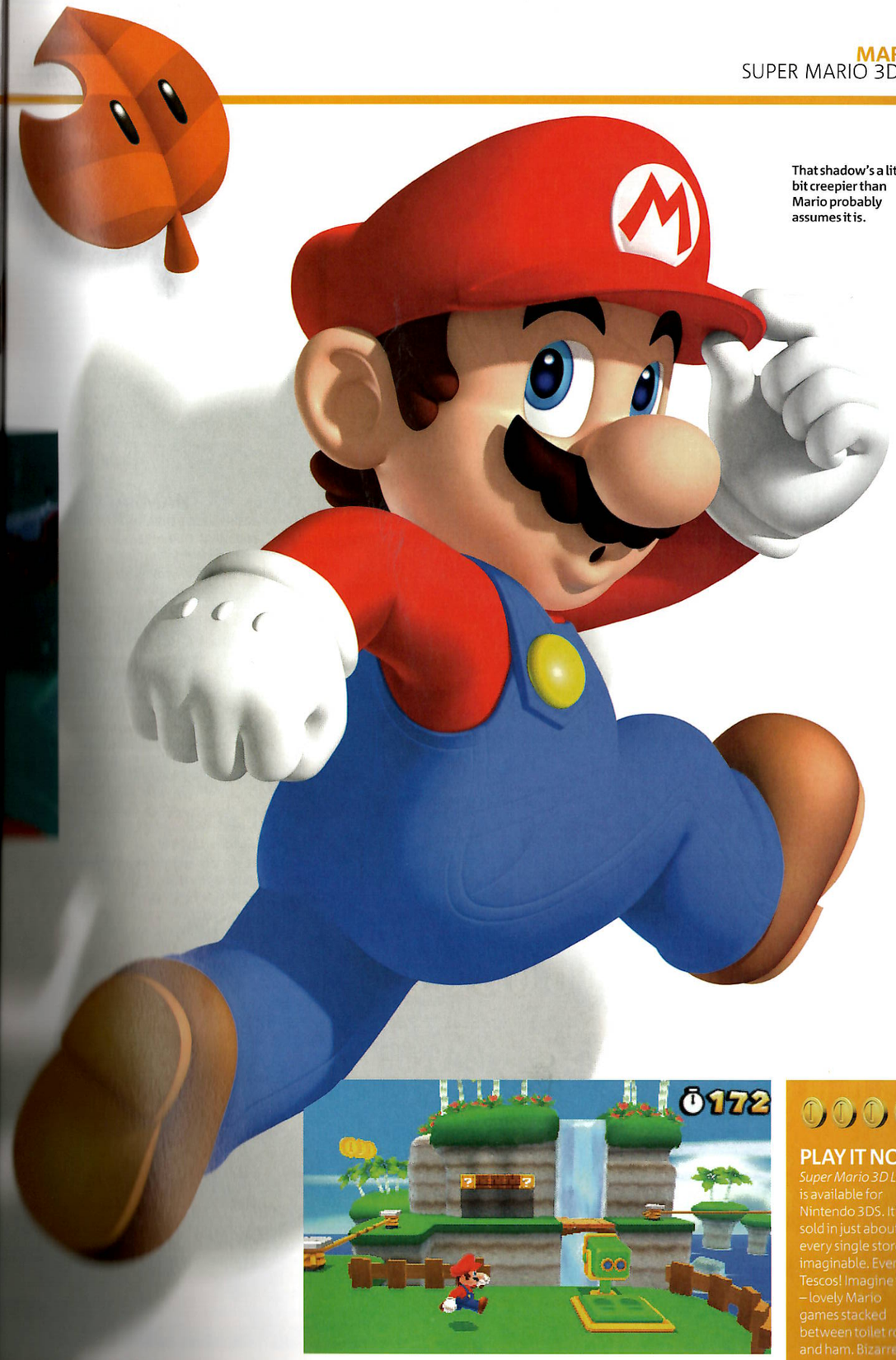
It takes a little while to get your head round *Super Mario 3D Land*'s structure. On first appearance it looks like a handheld version of the *Super Mario Galaxy* games. Mario can wander around wherever he likes, with the camera swooping about to find the best vantage point. It's only once you spend a bit of time with it that Nintendo's promise of a 2D soul starts to make sense. Despite the seemingly free-roaming nature of the game, Mario only ever has one set path. The aim in every level is always to reach the flagpole at the end, ideally while collecting the three Star Coins hidden in each stage along the way.

There's no Star Bit collection, no helping bees with itches on their bellies, no racing monkeys and no windsurfing on the back of giant manta rays, just straight 'point A to B' stuff. When you take a hit there's no energy meter, you simply shrink to small Mario. Swimming underwater is a case of pressing the jump button to bob up as in the Super Mario Bros. games, rather than holding it to swim forward like in the other free-roaming Mario adventures. This is something of a

Who's even responsible for building a flying floorboard fortress?

Water levels are like someone's shoved a tiny aquarium into your top screen.

Parkour stole every good idea it ever had from Mario. Including the clothes.

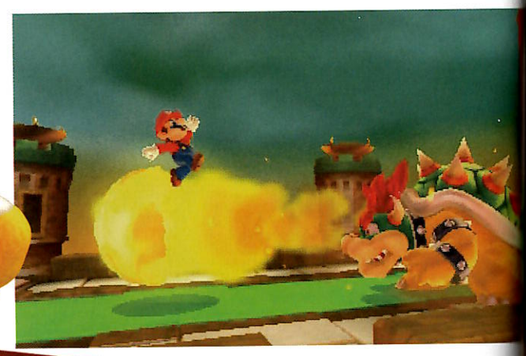


That shadow's a little bit creepier than Mario probably assumes it is.

PLAY IT NOW

Super Mario 3D Land is available for Nintendo 3DS. It's sold in just about every single store imaginable. Even Tescos! Imagine that – lovely Mario games stacked between toilet roll and ham. Bizarre.

This is as cruel as Bowser's ever been. Making Peach wear a boat as a belt? Pretty harsh.

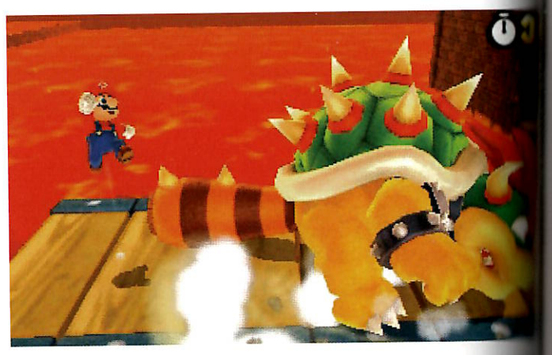


Frankenstein's monster of a Mario game, a gam
the heart and mind of an old-school side-scroll
platformer transplanted inside the body of a 3D

LEVEL HEADED

As is the Mario platforming norm these days, m
the game's levels are built around an imaginat
gameplay mechanic. Each stage guarantees at
one new object or enemy you've never
with before, keeping things fresh witho
repetition. At times you may feel like yo
done all this before – some of the game
mechanics introduced have been copie
previous games (Like the cannons that fire a h
Mario across the stage, and platforms that flip
you jump taken from *Super Mario Galaxy*'s Flip
Galaxy) but for the most part there are plenty
imaginative new ideas in each world you enc

Super Mario 3D Land was clearly put toge
the same care and attention given to every ot
triple-A Nintendo title, with the sort of quality
many other development studios can't even
close to achieving. The camera is rock solid a
rarely points where you don't want it to – an
feat given how much more often this game c
perspective than other Mario games. The litt
graphical touches also provided a level of de
wasn't even really seen in the Wii games – w
have thin layers of snow on top of the quest
that drift off in little explosions as you hit the

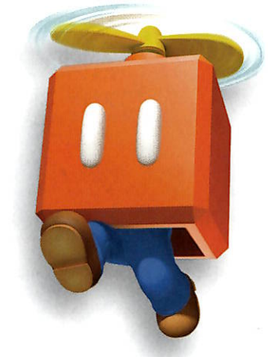


MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

PROPELLER HEAD
A couple of times, [illegible] your head into one of [illegible] and spinning yourself [illegible] is a treety delight.

A LONG WAY DOWN
A few top-down sections have real fun with stereoscopic 3D, using it to show stomach-lurching plummets or shoot flames into your eyes.

STING IN THE TAIL
Mario isn't the one only to benefit from the Raccoon Tail – you see Goombas and Bullet Bills wearing it and even face a Raccoon Bowser.



[illegible] boat over [illegible] and we reckon [illegible] got them into an [illegible]

the inter-World cutscenes add some variety not seen since *Super Mario World* as a panicked Mario reacts differently to every photo left behind by Bowser's crew.

Meanwhile, controlling Mario is a charm despite the potentially confusing combination of 2D gameplay and 3D graphics. It only takes a few minutes to get used to holding down the sprint button to make Mario dash, something that was never needed in a free-roaming Mario game before, but it soon becomes second nature. He's also got a new standing dash move, where holding down the sprint button before moving starts him running on the spot, allowing you to reach top speed instantly when you move. This is particularly handy when jumping between narrow platforms where you need to make a long jump but don't have the space for a run-up.

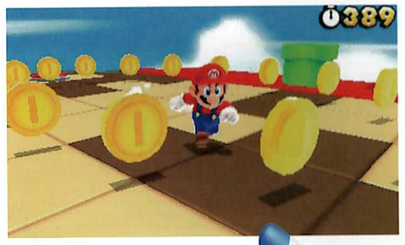
A couple of moves take a little longer to get to grips with. Doing a long jump can be awkward since you have to hold the dash and duck buttons before quickly pressing the jump button, and his charging crouch jump (returning from *Super Mario Bros. 2*) is rarely worth doing in anything other than rare circumstances because the difference in height gained is negligible. These are minor quibbles when all is said and done, because while the long jump is handy in later levels both moves are unnecessary enough that you can complete the game without ever really needing them.

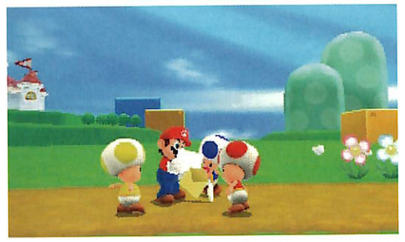
> "SUPER MARIO 3D LAND IS THE FIRST ESSENTIAL COMPLETELY NEW 3DS TITLE"

VISION IMPRESS

Perhaps one of the most pleasant surprises we had when playing *Super Mario 3D Land* was the realisation that this is the first game that truly mades use of the handheld's 3D effect. While 3D in most of the other 3DS games released previously looked great but was ultimately purely aesthetic, this was the first game we'd played in which you really do feel at a disadvantage if you don't have the 3D slider turned up. This is instantly obvious in the smaller optical illusion-style bonus rooms which deliberately position blocks in a way that makes it impossible to tell where they're positioned unless you switch from 2D to 3D, but it's also the case for the game as a whole.

While Mario games tend to stay away from top-down viewpoints because they make it very difficult to judge jumps (as anyone who's ever used the Rocket Nozzle in *Super Mario Sunshine* will attest), many of the levels in *Super Mario 3D Land* feature top-down levels. Some stages are entirely vertical, seeing you constantly dropping down huge chasms and trying to land on small platforms at the bottom of





Yeah, he looks pretty tooled-up here, but he's still wearing a onesie under there.

them. Playing these stages in 2D (while obviously possible) can be very difficult because it's hard to gauge how high you are, making it difficult to land on platforms and enemies properly without carefully inspecting shadows on the ground. Switch to 3D and it instantly becomes a lot easier and far more enjoyable. It truly does give a new dimension to Mario platforming as these levels almost feel like brand new experiences, impressive for a modified *Mario 64* gameplay engine now in its fifth iteration.

Audiophiles are also in for a treat as once again Nintendo's composers provide us with a great selection of cheery tunes ranging from brand new tracks to rearranged versions of classic ditties. The new main theme has a *Super Mario Bros. 3* vibe to it and is one of those songs that sticks in your head long after you've switched the 3DS off – we much prefer it to the decidedly average *New Super Mario Bros.* theme

Despite all these positives, it may surprise you t[illegible] we played through *Super Mario 3D Land* for our original review we initially struggled to decide whether it would be right to slap one of ONM's prestigious Gold Awards on it and declare it yet another incredible Mario game as we leapt int[illegible] with a "wahoo!" and moseyed off into the sun[illegible] our heels with a smile on our face and not a ca[illegible] world. We were enjoying it, but something wa[illegible]

There's a feeling that's hard to shake off wh[illegible] playing the first few hours of *Super Mario 3D L*[illegible] feeling that rarely crops up in major Nintendo-developed games. It's a feeling that at various [illegible] the game, it seems the same degree of imagi[illegible] and attention dedicated to the level design a[illegible] hasn't been applied across the board.

The best example of this is the boss battles. [illegible] there are nine in the main game, they only re[illegible] into two real types – the airship battles agai[illegible] Boom and/or his female companion, and the [illegible] battles against Bowser. The former is the sta[illegible] 'jump on their head three times' affair each t[illegible] the latter is simply a case of getting past Bow[illegible] hitting the switch at the end of the level. Ma[illegible] sympathisers will no doubt pass this simplic[illegible] homage to the simpler Mario games of old, b[illegible] reality that would be wrong because even S[illegible] *Bros. 3* had the Koopa Kids in there to keep [illegible] fight interesting. By the time you've beaten [illegible] airship you may start wondering if perhaps [illegible] more time could have been spent adding di[illegible] bosses like *New Super Mario Bros.* did.

There's also a disappointing lack of new [illegible] ups. The Tanooki suit, while a welcome retu[illegible] initially does little more than give Mario the [illegible] attack from the *Galaxy* games and let him float slowly in mid-air. The Boomerang suit is a neat addition thanks to the ability to throw your boomerangs to collect items, but other than that (and the standard Mario suite of Fire Flowers, Mushrooms and Starmen), that's it. There are no new or retro power-ups – no Frog Suit, no ability to fly, no Yoshi, nothing like that. That *Super Mario Bros. 3* – the game this borrows most from – featured twice as many suits is disappointing.

Our last niggle is *Super Mario Bros. 3D Land*'s answer to the Super Guide system. In *New Super Mario Bros.* Wii, this system played through the level for you while avoiding all the hidden Star Coins, so you could still see how to finish the level but would have to go back and get the Star Coins yourself to fully complete the game. This time you're given two levels of help depending on how many times you die, but neither works so well. Lose five lives and you get the option to play through the level permanently invincible, leaving you free to collect all three Star Coins and finish the level if you wish with no punishment whatsoever. Die another five times and you'll then have the opportunity to use a P-Wing, which skips the level and chucks you straight to the flagpole. Both options are useless for players who simply want to see how to complete the level so they can try it for themselves, so we'd have preferred the *Super Mario Galaxy 2* system.

SIMPLE PLEASURE?

The main problem we had, however, was that old bugbear that has become the central talking point of all modern Mario games – the difficulty level. Make no bones about it, *Super Mario 3D Land*'s eight worlds are easy, moreso than any other Mario game in the past decade. After two and a half hours and more than 100 lives gained we were staring at the credits with a stunned look on our face. It was at this point we started to worry about the review. "We can't possibly give this more than 90 per cent", we thought as we watched the lengthy list of developers scroll up the screen. It was fun and less experienced gamers will take a lot longer to finish it, but Mario diehards would breeze through it. Figures in the 75-85 per cent range started spinning in our head, and by the time the Special Thanks section appeared in the credits we could already picture the inevitable forum arguments that would ensue.

Then, almost as if the game could read our mind, the twist appeared that solved our disturbing dilemma. Usually whatever happens the end of the game is considered a spoiler but this time it's actually an important factor to consider when deciding whether to buy this game. After the credits roll the game unlocks another eight special worlds, essentially doubling the game's size. Some levels are remixed versions of those in the main adventure, but with added challenges like time trials or the return of Cosmic Mario from *Super Mario Galaxy*. Others are completely new levels, given the same care and attention as those in the main game. Most importantly, they're far more difficult than anything you'll find in the first eight worlds. They're still not up there with the final stage in *Super Mario Galaxy 2* but they're hard enough that finishing the game with every Star Coin is going to take seasoned Mario fans around 12-15 hours – and everyone else even longer.

Super Mario 3D Land is superb. The care and attention put into every aspect of it is beyond words and the only real problem – the difficulty – is blown away by its remarkable post-credits reveal. This was the first truly essential, completely new title for the 3DS. +

MARIO'S MEETS MR BENN

THE TANOOKI SUIT
Mario's raccoon onesie dominates the game, with a wind-blown tree of Super Leaves triggering betailed transformations throughout.

BOOMERANG MARIO
The Boomerang Bros. deeply regret bringing their curved toys to work when Mario nabs them. The deadly tools come back, but goons don't.

PROPELLER BLOCK
There's something funny about Mario sticking his head inside a block with a propeller on top and watching it yank him to the heavens.

FORMAT Wii U OUT NOVEMBER 2013 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD TOKYO PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario 3D World

How Mario's Wii U adventure is the cat's meow

WHAT IS IT

Mario's Wii U quest saw Nintendo really flexing its creative muscles in a way that *New Super Mario Bros. U* didn't. It's a bit good, this one.

A strident burst of brass announced the hero's arrival in *Super Mario Galaxy*: a bold, triumphant fanfare to herald the return of the king. Mario landed with a gymnastic flourish, spreading his arms wide in a gesture of ridiculous showmanship, as if to say "Ta-da! I'm back!"

This was uncharted territory for Mario, yet he entered this universe of spherical planetoids and gravity-defying trickery with the swagger of a man who knew exactly what he was doing. You could understand his confidence when you considered the talents of the team behind him, EAD Tokyo proving over the course of two games that it was capable of taking Mario – and an entire genre – to new heights.

The GamePad lets you poke and blow on the game with hilarious effects. Give it a go!

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

By contrast, there are no fanfares in *Super Mario 3D World*'s opening stage, no grandiose introductions. A brief piece of scene-setting sees a fairy kidnapped by Bowser – hey, it makes a change from Peach – and Mario, along with Luigi, Toad and the princess herself, sets off to rescue her and her winged friends from the Sprixie Kingdom. By trimming away the narrative fat, it shows just how keen Nintendo is to cut to the chase, to welcome you into this new world – even if the initial reaction is one of mild concern. By moving away from *Galaxy*'s epic sweep, is EAD Tokyo taking a step back?

Yet true confidence isn't about pomp and bravado. There's a quiet grace about *3D World*'s opening stages that give it a perceptible air of self-belief. It's breezy and confident – relaxed even. You'd certainly never have thought the pressure was on during development, and it most assuredly was, because Mario and friends had a heavy burden on their shoulders.

Firstly, they had to bear the weight of Nintendo's sales expectations for Wii U at Christmas 2013. This

Smash a POW block and it'll shatter every enemy nearby and drop tasty coins. Woo!

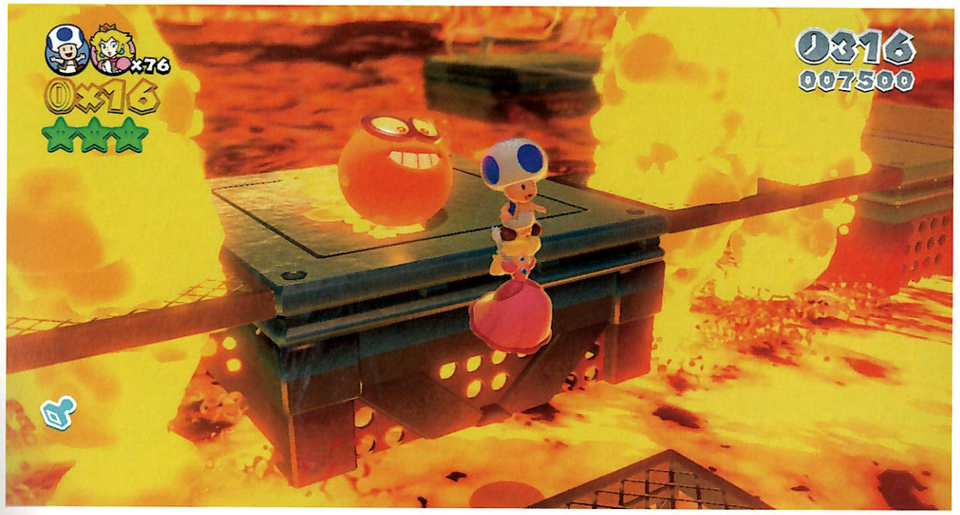
Mario has starred in his own baseball games – is this why he has such a deadly throw? Ooof!

PLAY IT NOW

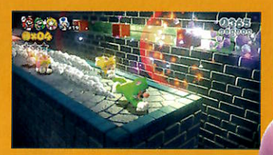
Super Mario 3D World is available on Wii U, and can be bought on disc or played as a digital download from the eShop. The choice!

"SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD IS BRIMMING OVER WITH INVENTION AND FUN"

This is what [illegible] cat gets up [illegible] you go [illegible] Looks so [illegible]



MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS



GET YOUR SKATES ON
Fans have asked Nintendo to bring back Kuribo's Shoe – the giant boot Mario could ride in *SMB3*. Nintendo went one better with this icy treat.

LIGHT UP OUR LIVES
3D World's gorgeous lighting has to be seen to believed. It's never better than in subterranean levels where it turns dark cracks into shiny delights.

had been pinpointed as the console's big Christmas game, even if 3D Mario games have historically lagged behind their side-scrolling counterparts in commercial heft. Meanwhile, in the eyes of the players who were looking for a reason to turn on their Wii Us – or still needed convincing to buy one – it had to top *Super Mario Galaxy*, or at least come close to matching it.

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

That it should feel so lissom, so sprightly is remarkable in this context. The early rumbles of discontent, when the game's initial footage was released, dissipated closer to release weeks thanks to a barrage of clips from *3D World*'s later, more challenging stages. In truth, Nintendo might have given a little too much away, revealing a few secrets that would have been best discovered during play rather than via a teaser trailer. Yet needs must as the devil drives: commerce prevailed, and a handful of wonderful moments were spoiled. A handful, happily, of several buckets worth.

Super Mario 3D World is brimming over with invention and generosity. At times, you worry if it's almost too generous. At times, it's like a large pack of gourmet jelly beans, offering a deep, tangy burst of flavour with every bite, yet there's only one of each kind of flavour in the pack, or two at most if you're lucky. To describe it as the kitchen sink approach to game design wouldn't be entirely accurate, because there's really nothing extraneous here, but at the same time there's no consistent, overarching theme.

You'll whizz through a desert area of the world map and barely come across more than one sandy level. Indeed, the only thing connecting one stage from the next is that they're all beautifully crafted and you get the delightful job of exploring them, mining each one for three green stars, a secret character stamp (used, in a delightful touch, to decorate Miiverse posts), and grabbing the top of the flagpole at the end of the stage.

A spinning green star and a golden flag mark the ones you've truly conquered, and in the first four worlds you'll worry that you've beaten too many on your first try. Played alone, these stages are spacious and easy, and it seems that the need to cater for four players may have had a negative impact on the level design. That's not to say they lack creativity, by any means, but platforms do feel unusually roomy.

3D MARIO
SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD

It wouldn't be a Mario game without Kamek rocking up and using magic to be a pain.

Every character has their own version of each costume. Peach is the prettiest puss.

That concern isn't there while you're in these levels, mind, because you'll be having too much fun to care: EAD Tokyo understands better than almost anyone how to make simple actions joyous, while the novelty factor of a new 3D Mario in HD is still hard to resist. These worlds are bright, varied, beautifully lit and framed (you can move the camera in increments or freely – using the Wii U GamePad's gyroscopes to change the view – but you'll rarely feel the need to) with a surprising level of texture detail, populated by characterful new enemies along with a clutch of old favourites with a spot of HD paint. One of Nintendo's strengths is building tangibly solid-feeling worlds, and the extra detail only heightens that sensation.

I'VE GOT THE POWER

As you gleefully romp through these early stages, you'll be introduced to two of the best new Mario power-ups we've seen in several years. The Double Cherry splits your current hero in two, and if you collect another you'll have three clones, then four, then five... with four players, it feels like the early Mario 128 demo on the GameCube (depicting an army of Mario clones marching around a *Galaxy*-ish sphere) is brought to life, and yet there's not a hiccup in the frame-rate. There'll be plenty of hiccups in your actual playing, though, as keeping five Marios alive at once is hilariously tricky.

Cat Mario, meanwhile, is adorable and quite gloriously overpowered, scampering up vertical surfaces to bypass hazards and snaffle stars and pouncing on enemies with claws outstretched. And if it seems a little too handy, too easy a crutch to lean on, you'll soon realise that it's useless when the gaps widen and the hazards no longer disappear with a swipe of Mario's furry paw.

From the fifth region onwards, *3D World* starts to turn the screw. Gradually, at first - you'll reach a stage's flag without having discovered all its secrets, and dart back in for another go - but soon you'll see your life counter tick downwards, and you'll be glad of those rhythmic fruit-machine minigames that pop up sporadically, awarding you seven or eight 1-Ups for matching every reel.

THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Suddenly, that slow-burn introduction makes sense. This is a game that just keeps building and building, getting better and better and better as it progresses. World 5 is a stand-out in terms of variety, offering short, sharp challenges one minute and the next a sprawling sandbox stage that gives you an all-too-brief glimpse at how an open-world Mario game might play.

The run-up to the inevitable Bowser confrontation (which, by the way, may be the finest face-off between the two so far) is even better, not to mention what follows. The element of surprise is crucial to what makes *3D World* quite so special, but we will say the way that Nintendo remixes previous stages into rock hard variations and manages to stir in a spoonful of *Galaxy* magic makes for a brilliant run of levels.

It's a game with the nervy restlessness of someone who's had five espressos in half an hour, yet with the focus and expertise to pull off such a broad range of ideas: disparate, not desperate. There are big worlds and small worlds; worlds to explore and worlds to race through; worlds where you can see the flagpole from the start point and others where it doesn't appear until the final seconds.

The Sprixies h[illegible] been cruelly [illegible] by Bowser. G[illegible] thing Mario [illegible]

It offers a stern platforming challenge one moment, and then gives you a burst of empowerment with a Mega Mushroom (never used more effectively than here) or a Starman the next. It pays tribute to its past, riffing on ideas from earlier games, and takes cues from the present, with quick-fire brawls and tests of skill and timing that would make for a very good mobile game – and should, maybe, be considered for DLC like *Rayman Legends*' challenge mode. It even dares to switch genres. It's always a platformer, but it's also a stealth game, a puzzle game, a shooter, a racer, an adventure. It's all things.

It even makes a decent swing of using the Wii U GamePad. Off-screen play and tilt-based camera controls are nice little bonuses, and there are levels that feature alternative functionality as a nice little bonus. You're asked to blow into the microphone to move wind-powered platforms, or to scatter smaller enemies, or simply mess with in-game dandelions. Tap the touchscreen and you can hold enemies in place, bang gongs, and slide back screen doors. All silly fun.

These ideas are used sparingly, perhaps to ensure that three other players with Wii remotes or Pro controllers don't feel left out, but as such they can feel slightly insubstantial. Cute, sure, and there's a delightful, tactile feel to the platforms you'll prod to life, creating stairways to guide other players to upper areas, but next to the likes of *Nintendo Land* or *The Wonderful 101*, the GamePad hardly feels integral to the experience. Not a criticism as such: Mario only needs an analog stick and some buttons to shine.

Yet you wonder if *World*'s director, Kenta Motokura, was maybe inspired by Hideki Kamiya's freewheeling superhero fantasy. That same spirit of invention is found in *3D World*, even if it's applied with a little more restraint. Take, for example, the Toad Captain levels: in these self-contained bonus stages you'll guide the diminutive explorer – last seen lost in Mario Galaxy space – through single-screen puzzles reminiscent of *3D Land*'s sporadic stereoscopic conundrums.

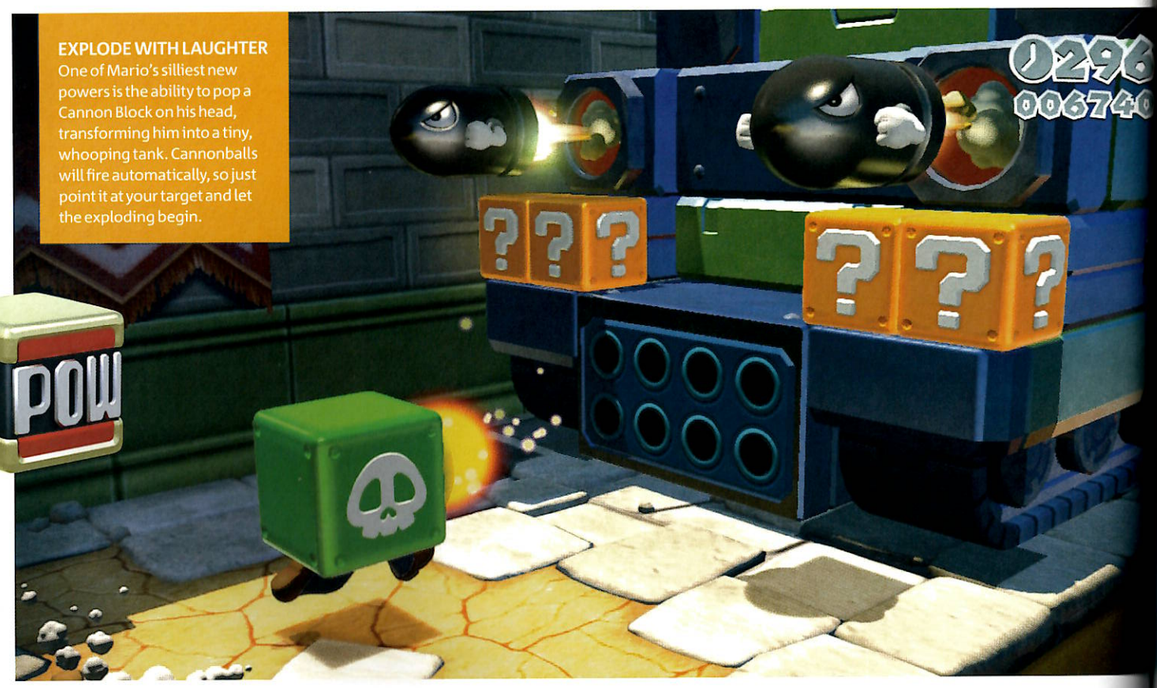
With no jump button, you'll simply need to guide him past enemies and hazards, rotating the camera to locate the ones that would otherwise be hidden from view. Why is it here? Perhaps it's an education in right stick camera movement for a younger audience more comfortable with a single analogue, an introduction to more complex controls ahead of a new *Galaxy* game. While that would be awesome, the likely explanation is a much simpler one: they're really good fun.

GET IN CHARACTER

The quartet of playable characters acts as a kind of difficulty modifier. Peach's hover jump makes her ideal for beginners (and grabbing the flagpoles you missed on a second run), while Mario is your archetypal all-rounder. Toad's the one you'll plump for when you're trying to beat course times – you're able to challenge Ghost Miis, a lot like Mario Kart's phantom time trials – and yet the extra height in Luigi's jump makes him the choice for quicker ascents on the

We love how the raindrops drizzle down the screen. A real cool touch.

3D MARIO
SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD



EXPLODE WITH LAUGHTER
One of Mario's silliest new powers is the ability to pop a Cannon Block on his head, transforming him into a tiny, whooping tank. Cannonballs will fire automatically, so just point it at your target and let the exploding begin.

"COMPETING FOR A GOLDEN CROWN IS THE CROWNING GLORY OF MULTIPLAYER"

CROWNING GLORY
Get the highest score in a level and you'll be able to wear a crown in the next. It's incredibly annoying for everyone not wearing the crown – don't blame them if they come after you, trying to knock it from your head with a butt stomp. You'd never see Prince Charles doing this to his...

steeper stages. A handful of stages have buttons that only certain characters can activate, encouraging you not to stick to a single one, while the random character button is vital for multiplayer - particularly if a regular winner gets too comfortable with their favourite.

It's a wonderful single-player game, then, and that's only half the story. In multiplayer, the peaceful stroll of those early stages frequently descends into chaos. The timer that inhibits exploration in solo play suddenly kicks in, as the music speeds up and everyone races for the flag. It's an irresistible blend of co-operation and competition: it's an easier game if you work together, and yet by ranking the players by score (determined by coins collected, enemies defeated, and how high up the flagpole you land) Nintendo encourages every player's vicious streak. It's deviously clever stuff.

KING OF THE CASTLE

Fittingly, the crown awarded to the victorious player is the multiplayer game's crowning glory: it's purely decorative, yet its mere appearance is enough to provoke a stage-long campaign of bullying, with aggression and underhand tactics regularly employed to dislodge it from the previous stage's champion. You'll pick up other players to throw them at enemies or off ledges, shift moveable platforms away from rivals, and even shoot them with the cannon block if they're getting too big for their Tanooki Suits.

It's a riot, and the only minor issue is the camera favouring those who race ahead, as others are left trailing in their wake, encased in bubbles until they catch up. It's less of a problem with two or three, which seems to be the sweet spot when it comes to the later stages. Simply reaching the end here is a challenge in itself, and witnessing the shared life-counter dwindle more rapidly as the game goes on will be enough for most players to adopt a more collaborative approach, for mutually beneficial progression.

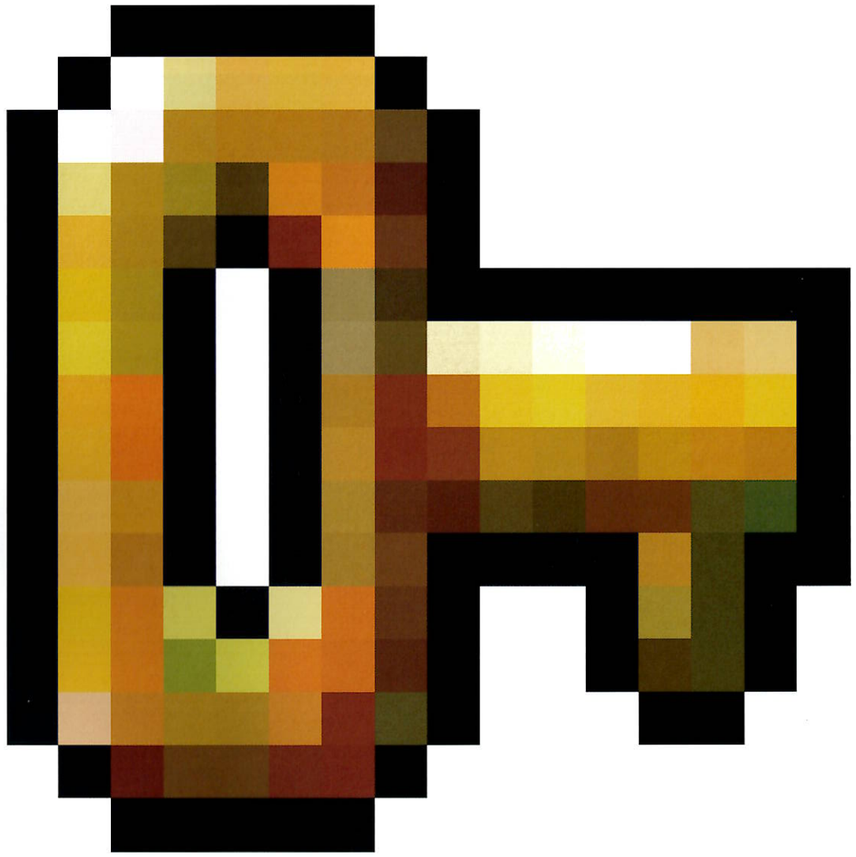
A WORLD OF FUN

If *Super Mario 3D World* lacks the grand scale and ambition of the *Galaxy* games, it's a comfortable match in colour, pacing and variety – and in its moment-to-moment play, it comes shockingly close to beating them. Where it's undoubtedly superior is in its application of multiplayer: *Galaxy*'s Co-Star mode was a charming addition to the formula, but it's quickly trumped by the laughs and thrills you'll share with up to three others in Mario's Wii U playground.

The appeal of Mario's first HD 3D adventure is perhaps best summed up by its soundtrack, where bouncy strings meet gently percussive tropical themes, chiming Christmas bells, jaunty accordions, and energetic shamisen and shakuhachi. While its rare orchestral manoeuvres are among the musical highlights, it's telling that there's little of *Galaxy*'s bombast. As the fervour for next-gen hardware reached its crescendo, EAD Tokyo quietly went about the business of making the best game of the lot.

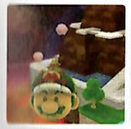
There's no clarion call of trumpets to herald the arrival of *Super Mario 3D World*. And yet, of all the games released in the last few years – on Nintendo platforms or otherwise – it might deserve the biggest fanfare of them all. +

Either Mario is sweating or that is drizzle on his very shiny mug.



The 25 Greatest Mario Secrets

Like a box of chocolates with multiple layers, the Mushroom Kingdom is a never-ending carousel of stealthily-concealed wonders. From Warp Zones to watermelons, here's a run down of 25 of the best (or in some cases, worst) kept secrets in the Mario series. How many of them have you seen?



THROWBACK GALAXY

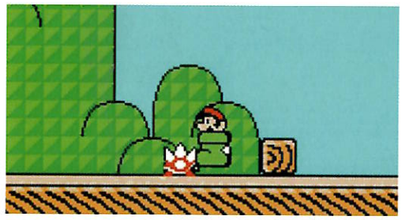
SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

[illegible] Galaxy in *Super Mario Galaxy 2*'s 'S' World [illegible] completing World Six) is a winner, but the [illegible] is Throwback Galaxy, a faithful remake [illegible] famous Whomp's Fortress, slightly [illegible] accommodate Mario's new moveset. At the [illegible] fortress, as always, is good ol' King Thwomp. [illegible] meet him it's like being reunited with an old [illegible] friend who wants to crush you dead.

KURIBO'S SHOE

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

The Kuribo's Shoe is the rarest power-up in all of the Mario Universe. To date, it has only made one solitary appearance – in World 5-3 of *Super Mario Bros. 3*. In this stage, you'll encounter numerous Goombas hopping around in a giant green shoe. Bop one from underneath and they'll vacate the boot, giving Mario an opportunity to try and enabling him to stomp around on spiky ground.



POKÉBALL PLANET

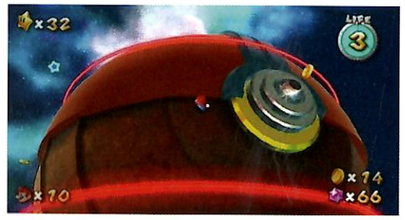
SUPER MARIO GALAXY

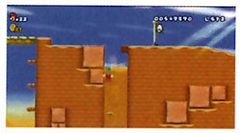
So there you are going about your business as usual in the Buoy Base Galaxy, when you suddenly find yourself strolling around a dusky red planetoid. Hit the switch and the top half of it contracts to reveal its watery underbelly. Half blue, half red with a switch in the middle – it's the spitting image of a Pokémon Pokéball. Thankfully, there's a Star inside, rather than a furious Snorlax.

1-UP WITH A BULLET

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

[illegible] have been cleverly arranged to offer [illegible] players who can demonstrate [illegible] composure under pressure. [illegible] steady stream of airborne Bullet [illegible] for more extra lives than an [illegible] hat into a bullet-stomping [illegible] section of World 3-2 [illegible] through the roof by the [illegible] finally reach the floor.

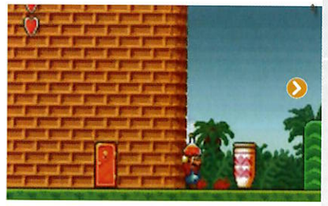




SINKING SANDS

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

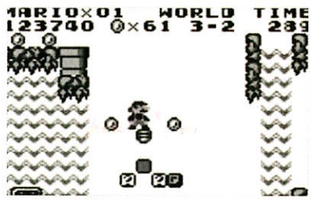
Many an unfortunate plumber has met their death scouring the scorched desertscape of World 2-2 for the location of the first Star Coin. To find it, you have to make a sink of faith. Hop into this pit of quicksand and follow it all the way down to the bottom. Instead of meeting your maker, you'll meet a secret room containing the treasured Coin. Pick the right quicksand, mind, as the others lead to Mushroom Kingdom heaven. Wah!



SUBSPACE

SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

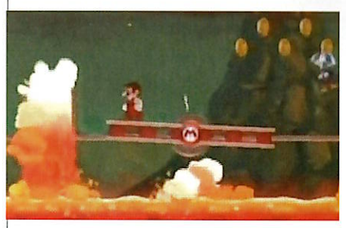
Subcon has an alternate dimension called Subspace which is accessed by throwing a magic potion on the ground. Once there, you've got a few seconds to take advantage of the change in environment before returning to Subcon. If you enter Subspace right at the end of level 1-3, as shown here, you can squeeze down the vase in the corner. Where does it lead? Directly to World 4. Nice! Er, unless you needed earlier worlds to help you warm up. Eep!



TOP FLOOR PLEASE

SUPER MARIO LAND

If you're on one of the underground levels (such as 1-3 or 3-2) of Mario's oddball Game Boy jaunt, it's well worth taking your time to jump around randomly in open areas; there are several hidden blocks which contain, of all things, a mechanical lift that'll hoist you right up to the ceiling of the level, whereupon you're free to saunter to the end of level with the minimum of duress. It's the old warp room trick from *SMB*, but we won't tell. Honest.



HATS OFF

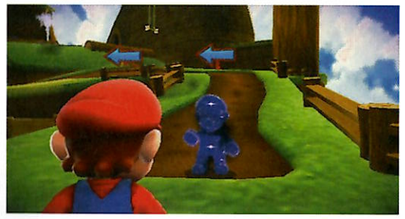
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

Complete a level with the full quota of 99 lives, and Mario will quite literally take his hat off to you (unless he's wearing the Propeller Hat – he'll need that, thank you very much). With all that lava doing the rounds you're better off with head protection. He'll continue to bounce around with the wind running through his hair until he comes a cropper, at which point the hat snaps back on. 98 lives just aren't enough to impress taskmaster Mario.

SPEED BOOST

SUPER MARIO GALAXY

Did you know that during the Cosmic Mario races, you can activate a speed boost from the starting line, just like in the Super Mario Kart games? Here's how to do it: hold forward on the nunchuk, hold down Z when the number '2' appears, and then press a on the word go. Mario will propel himself forward like a red and blue bullet, leaving smarmy Cosmic Mario to choke on his space dust. Suck it, blue boy!



9999 NOT OUT

SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

Only the very best will make it to the Grandm Galaxy. To reach this ruinous deathtrap of a le need to gobble up all 240(!) stars from acro game. But did you know that if you did that, a bank 9999 Star Bits, it'll open up a tougher ve the level, where you have to survive to the end taking a single hit? On top of that, all the coc the game will turn into watermelons.

IT'S-A-LUIGI

SUPER MARIO GALAXY

[illegible] completists amongst you: collect all 120 of [illegible] stars and you'll be able to tackle them [illegible] Luigi. Do it again with the gangly green [illegible] this slightly higher jump might throw off your [illegible] and you'll open up one final level, which [illegible] back to the Princess's castle, which has been [illegible] retrieved from outer space and is now in its original location.

EYE ON THE SKY

SUPER MARIO 64

Once you've bagged ten Power Stars and taken out Bowser for the very first time, you receive your ticket to travel to the Red Switch Fortress. But to get there, Mario's got to put his thinking cap on. See the light shining down from the sunroof in the centre of the castle hall? If Mario goes into first-person view and looks directly at the sunlight, he'll not only go blind, but he'll also warp straight to the Promised Land.

SPACE ZONE SECRET EXIT

SUPER MARIO LAND 2

Super Mario Land 2 boasted some king-sized secrets. The best hidden one is the secret exit of Space Zone 1. To unearth it, moonwalk your way to the halfway bell and jump to the left of the ringed planet in the background. You'll hit a hidden block. Jump again and you'll hit another. Do this until you reach the outer hemisphere and you'll eventually reach a catwalk leading to an exit.

LYING DOWN ON THE JO

ANY 3D MARIO GAME

All six 3D Mario games share an amusing Ea common. In any of these games, simply le controller alone for a few moments (prefe safe place), and Mario will seize the opport spot of much-deserved shut-eye. Hey, he le life. Similarly, leave Mario to his own devi one of Mario 64's snow levels and he'll brea little shivery jig.

CAPTAIN OLIMAR'S SHIP

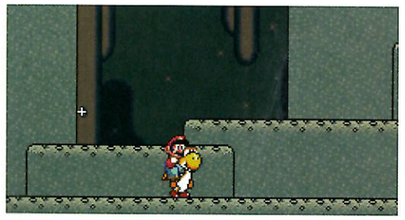
SUPER MARIO GALAXY

[illegible] little insider treat waiting for you deep [illegible] Galaxy. The spaceship you [illegible] towards the end of the level is a [illegible] of Captain Olimar's ship in the [illegible] Olimar, incidentally, was originally [illegible] make an appearance in the GBA RPG [illegible] but it was nixed at the last [illegible] to enjoy the cameo while it lasts.

EXOTIC YOSHIS

SUPER MARIO WORLD

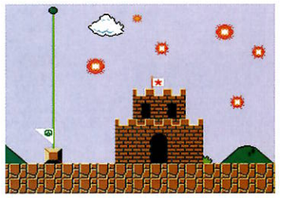
The first three Star Road levels contain differently coloured eggs. Nurture the babies to adulthood and each Mutant-Yoshi reacts differently when it crams a Koopa shell in its gob. Red Yoshi will spit out an arc of flames, while Yellow Yoshi will land with a deadly sand plume for as long as it's sucking on a shell. The Blue Yoshi is arguably the coolest of the lot; like Red Bull with humans, Koopa shells give him wings.



DRESSING THE PART

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

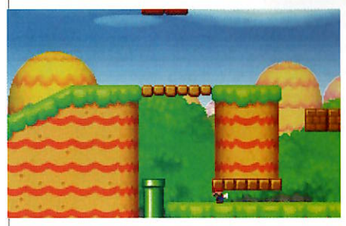
Mario's not known for his vast wardrobe – it tends to be dungarees or nothing for our hero, even if he's competing in a professional football match. So naturally, when he rolls up on the tropical Isle Delfino for his Summer Hols, he's hardly dressed for the occasion. Fortunately, you can kit Mario out a treat by speaking to the dude in sunglasses who lurks around in the main hub. Accrue 30 shines and he'll sort you out with a pair of sunglasses. Complete the game and he'll crank his generosity up a notch and deck you out with a nifty Hawaiian shirt, complete with a very chic Shine pattern. It's just a shame he doesn't have any flip-flops; Mario's feet probably smell like a cowshed by now...



FIREWORKS

SUPER MARIO BROS.

Reach the end-of-level flag with either a 1, 3 or 6 at the end of the timer and you'll see a mini-firework display. *New Super Mario Bros. DS* pays homage to this sparkly secret; if the last two digits on the timer are the same at the moment you hit the flag (11, 22, etc), then the sky lights up in recognition of your time-keeping and NES's level complete ditty blares out. In *NSMB2*, hit the flag with the last two digits matching the world (e.g. '11' in World 1) to find a secret 'Rainbow' stage.



A TINY PROBLEM

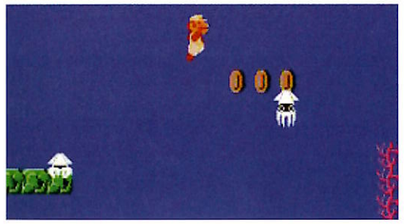
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. DS

You'll notice as you play through *New Super Mario Bros. DS* for the first time that the game skips directly from World 3 to World 5, and later from World 6 to World 8. To sneak your way into the remaining two levels, you'll need to think small. Scoff a mini mushroom before embarking on either the World 3 or World 5 castles, and Mario will slip down a mousehole that'll deliver him right to World 4/7's front door.

MINUS WORLD

SUPER MARIO BROS.

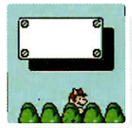
The most famous glitch in Super Mario canon takes you to a hellish underwater level from which there is no return. Should you for some reason wish to visit this everlasting Blooper reel, then reach the exit pipe at the end of World 1-2. Instead of entering you should stand on top of it and do what we're calling a 'duck jump' into the wall to the right. You'll stick in the wall and the game will freak out and send you to the Minus World.



UNDER THE BRIDGE

SUPER MARIO WORLD

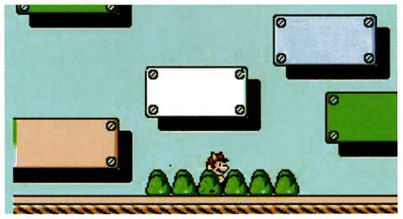
There's no such thing as male pattern baldness, that a hell of a lot of men have torn their hair ou to reach the Cheese Bridge Secret Area. To get end-of-level gate, you have to go under it. W right tools for the job – a cape and a Yoshi – it's You just need to float under the gate and laun your steed's back at the right time. If you're Yo revert to Plan B, AKA Operation: Certain D



BEHIND THE SCENES

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

In the third level of the first world there's a hidden Toad House behind the end-of-level exit containing a rare Warp Whistle, but to get to it, you have to get behind the scenery itself. How do you do that? The answer lies with an otherwise forgettable white block plonked smack-dab in the middle of the level. Hop onto it and hold down on the D-pad for a few seconds and Mario 'drops' through and lands behind the shrubbery. Evil.



"YOU ARE A SUPER PLAYE

SUPER MARIO WORLD

Any old chump can fudge their way to *Mari* Special Zone, but once you get there, you're own. Eight vicious levels stand between yo finish line. 'Tubular' inflates Mario to co proportions and 'Awesome' is a slippy deathtrap. Reach the Special Stage, Groovy, spot a chain of coins that read out 'You are player!'. Good luck collecting them

WELCOME TO WARP ZONE!

SUPER MARIO BROS.

This was the first ever indication that all is not what it seems in the Mushroom Kingdom. Enterprising players will discover the first Warp Zone on level 1-2, by bashing through the ceiling as Super Mario and strolling, off-camera, past the end-of-level pipe to a secret room which offers instant access to Worlds 2, 3 and 4. A similar fast track to World 5 can be discovered on 4-2 by repeating this trick, but more adventurous players can uncover a vine halfway through the level that will express deliver you to Worlds 6, 7 and 8. Players on the hunt for Warp Zones in *SMB*'s brutal follow-up *The Lost Levels* could be in for a rude awakening, though – some force you to warp back to a previous world!

YOSHI ON THE ROOF

SUPER MARIO 64

Yoshi was the *Super Mario 64* equivalent of Loch Ness Monster. Playgrounds up and down the land were awash with Eggy Dino sightings as N64 plodded through Mario's debut 3D adventure. It looks like it was one of those gaming urban myths, along in Street Fighter II or one of those rude arcade games, but slap a saddle on our back and call it a day if the long-tongued one doesn't indeed make an appearance!

To get your life, you have to collect all 120 stars hidden inside the castle itself. There, you'll find a lift that takes you to the rooftops, where Yoshi "Wait a minute, is that really you?", the walking [illegible] begins. "They told me I might see you [illegible] but not just about given up hope!" How [illegible] Maybe a time traveller did it to [illegible] from starring in *Yoshi's New Island*. Yoshi continues by relaying a personal [illegible] the development team and gifting the [illegible] and, best of all, adding a sparkly [illegible] pompom. Rather disconcertingly, he [illegible] off the side of the castle, but [illegible] a short double, as Yoshi continues to [illegible] to this day. No other Mario secret had [illegible] this. Although we didn't get to ride [illegible] until *Mario Sunshine* for that [illegible] being right at the dawn of [illegible] dino-body in glorious three [illegible] gathering each and every one of [illegible] A truly magical Mario moment.

MARIO KART
INTRO

108

MARIO KART 8

Is Wii U's Mario Kart the Mario Kart to end all Mario Karts? Also, how mnay times can a magazine write the words Mario Kart without an angry reader saying "hey, stop padding out bits of the mag with the words 'Mario Kart'"?

CONTENTS

Mario Kart

070 SUPER MARIO KART **074** MK 64 **078** SUPER CIRCUIT **080** DOUBLE DASH!! **084** MK DS **090** MK Wii **096** MARIO KART 7 **102** MARIO KART 8

FORMAT SNES OUT JANUARY 1993 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Super Mario Kart

Back when Blue Shells were just a glint in Nintendo's eye

WHAT IS IT

The game that started it all. The original is still the fastest and the hardest Mario Kart game to date.

If the mere sight of the words "Super Mario Kart" in big letters on these pages makes your nostalgia gland burst through your chest and bounce around the room like some sort of alien at a Tiesto rave, you were clearly around for the glory days.

The days before the dirty Blue Shells, the snaking technique and Nintendo's obsessive consideration for 'family friendliness'. Sure, it had the random item system for that element of unpredictability, but more than any subsequent iteration in the series, *Super Mario Kart* was about raw skill.

Push aside its colourful visuals, cutesy characters and chirpy music for a moment. *Super Mario Kart* on the SNES was a wolf in sheep's clothing. Now, we love every Mario Kart game made, but if there's one thing that the series has lost over the years, it's fear. What does selecting the 150cc mode mean any more? The karts are slightly faster and you'll need to power slide to keep up. But that's all really.

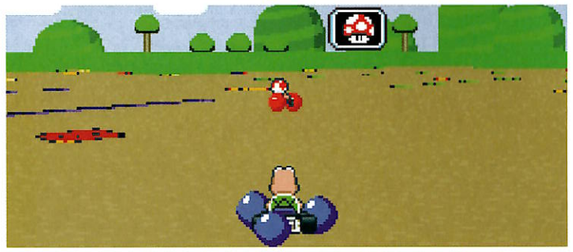
You'll want to invest in a second controller to get the most out of battling.

KART BURN

In *Super Mario Kart*, 150cc was the 'you're having a laugh mate' mode. Selecting it made the same chirpy 'bling' sound as all the other options, but somewhere inside the cartridge was an evil laugh cackling devilishly as the game's microchips heated up to a glowing red. No more messing about – this thing was about to wreck you like you'd just insulted its m[illegible] was brutal. If you played it you will remember [illegible] Modern games take trivial things such as fairn[illegible] equality way more seriously than games of the [illegible] '90s. While you were restricted to random iten[illegible] usually attainable once per lap, the CPU chara[illegible] each had their own special weapons or power[illegible] they could use infinitely – and usually would t[illegible] effect on the last lap, right before the finish lin[illegible]

The CPU also stuck its middle finger up at [illegible] things as 'top speed' or 'a fair rate of accelerat[illegible] *Super Mario Kart* players soon learned never t[illegible] that gaining a large lead and taking perfect c[illegible] guaranteed a win. At any moment the game [illegible] decide that your fun was over – like a big brot[illegible] was just allowing his little brother to have the [illegible] hand in a fight – and seemingly grant a CPU r[illegible] an invisible rocket. It would slap your head a[illegible] past you, then return to take a dump in your [illegible] before you put it back on for the next race. T[illegible] completely merciless it was.

We must have lost several months of free time to Battle Mode. Has it ever been bettered?



Mario Kart is way more fun than actual karting. Real karts don't like bananas in the engine.

COURSE IT'S NOT FAIR

These moments of unfairness are things we [illegible] crucify a game for nowadays, but that is all a[illegible] the retro charm of *Super Mario Kart*. Sure, th[illegible] beat you senseless, but then that made it all [illegible] satisfying when you did eventually get the [illegible] It was the sort of satisfaction that made you [illegible] leap out of your chair and shout your first f[illegible] expletives before nervously watching the d[illegible] your mum didn't burst in with a slipper in h[illegible]

It isn't just the difficulty level that differe[illegible] *Mario Kart* from its successors. Technologi[illegible] improvements over the years have allowed [illegible] to create larger, wider, more sprawling rac[illegible] the other hand, *Super Mario Kart*'s Mode 7 [illegible] technique used to create the game's rotati[illegible] were a technical marvel at the time, but it [illegible] meant the game's courses had to be cram[illegible] relatively small space.

So does that make the game's course[illegible] compared to modern Mario Kart? No. All [illegible] for courses that are extremely tight and fa[illegible] From the green light to the finishing line, y[illegible] were alight with activity as they danced a[illegible] chunky SNES buttons and your kart ninja [illegible] constant barrage of tricky twists and turn[illegible] out five laps in a little over a minute.

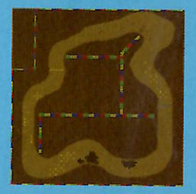
That, and the added concern for collec[illegible] speed-boosting coins, made for the most [illegible] racing in the series to this day and a style [illegible] that none except the very similar *Mario K[illegible] Circuit* on Game Boy Advance has manag[illegible]

PLAY IT NOW

Super Mario Kart is now available on Virtual Console on Wii and Wii U. You'll want to arm yourself with a Classic Controller, mind.

TOP OF THE TRACKS

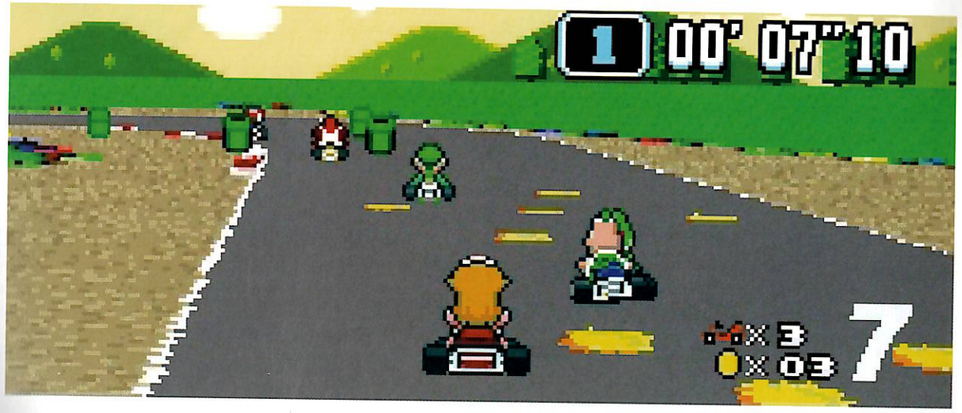
DONUT PLAINS 3
One of the hardest courses in the game. Two narrow bridges make it impossible to avoid the drink, and the CPU loves to bump you off.

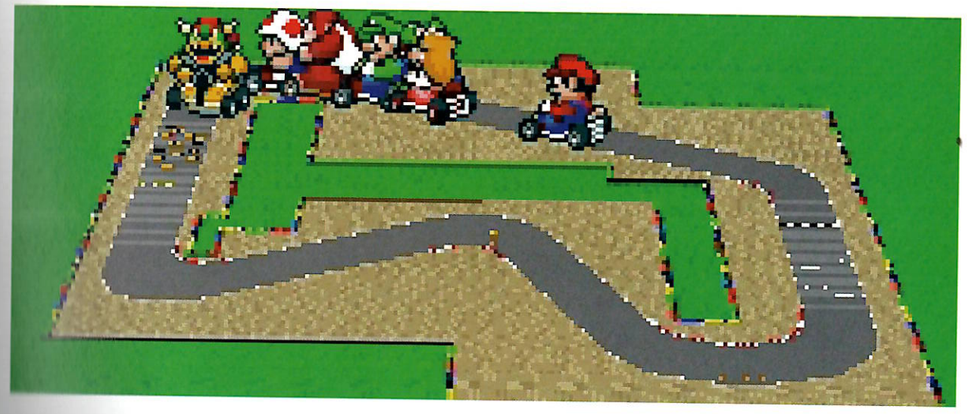


CHOCO ISLAND 1
The second slipperiest surface in the game, keeping the karts off the slow dark parts is tough and requires top power-sliding skill.

Look at Donkey Kong losing his mind on that bottom screen. Suck it up, you chimpy chump.

"KARTS PLUS ITEMS PLUS POWER SLIDING EQUALS JOY"





Old though they may be, these were courses of many complexities. Multiple paths like those in Bowser Castle 3 split racers up into chaotic groups, while secret shortcuts like the famed jump on Ghost Valley 1 gave players the risky but potentially rewarding chance to turn races upside down.

BATTLING IT OUT

The grip on the tarmac courses, meanwhile, allowed racers to blister around with little concern, while dirt courses like Choco Island made the karts flair out sideways like rally cars, and the icy Vanilla Lake tracks actually demanded caution on the gas pedal (this would be a first and last for the series). Think multiplayer nowadays and most people would tend to think first of the Call Of Duty series. Back in the distant past of 1993, though, it was all about *Super Mario Kart*. Two-player racing was great, but it was the Battle Mode that kept this cartridge in slots for literally years following your 150cc Special Cup victory.

Nintendo has experimented with second screen maps ever since *SMK*.

SIMPLY SUPER

It was minimalist; four battle arenas, all square and fairly simple in design and employing exactly the same weapons system as the racing. But shooting shells at a human opponent whose movements aren't restricted by the linearity of a race course is a whole different ball game. And so opened up the potential for an entirely different skill set – screen-watching, defensive and offensive driving and mad feather-wall-jump skills.

Everyone who played *Super Mario Kart* absolutely adored it. The series has come a long way since then, with Nintendo adding new innovations with each new iteration, but it's testament to *Super Mario Kart*'s essential greatness that the company dares not stray too far from the original formula.

Karts plus items plus power sliding equals joy. This is the formula that didn't just define the karting genre, it defined the very essence of the word 'fun'. +

FORMAT N64 OUT JUNE 1997 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Mario Kart 64

Mario finds an extra gear and an extra dimension in this stunning sequel!

WHAT IS IT

The N64 dragged Mario Kart revving and screaming into the 3D era, allowing four pals to partake in the mayhem at the same time. Heaven!

Just four short years passed between the release of *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64*, but compare the two games side-by-side and they seem a lifetime apart. The mid nineties saw the biggest technological leap in gaming any of us are likely to witness, with a new wave of powerful consoles, such as the N64. For the first time ever it was possible to play in fully realised 3D virtual-worlds, from the comfort of your sofa.

This advancement instantly revolutionised every gaming series you could care to mention, and Mario Kart was no exception. With the Nintendo 64's extra horsepower on board, Mario Kart's flat-packed circuits exploded into 3D masterpieces in a bloom of colour, charm and invention.

3D graphics meant that *Mario Kart 64* could include track features that just weren't possible on the SNES. Most notably, the courses now had height and depth to them. This paved the way for a whole new level of knuckle-whitening racing experiences, such as the death-defying leaps of faith that punctuate the Royal Raceway and DK Jungle Pass circuits, and the wild and bumpy Wario Stadium, where you could practically feel your backside bouncing off the seat of your kart as you drove over its muddy peaks and troughs.

Then of course there were the obstacles. In *Super Mario Kart*'s 2D world, on-screen hazards were largely limited to static objects such as pipes and piranha plants. But *Mario Kart 64*'s extra spatial dimension gave rise to a new breed of race-ruiners, who were free to move around the environment and would sometimes even come after you. Who could f instance, Sherbert Land's sinister giant pengu would purposefully waddle around their cave on the lookout for fenders to bend? Fortunat predictable movements allowed cautious dri squeeze past un-penguined... most of the tim

The hours of fun this little beauty brought us. Will we ever see the likes of it again? Fingers crossed.

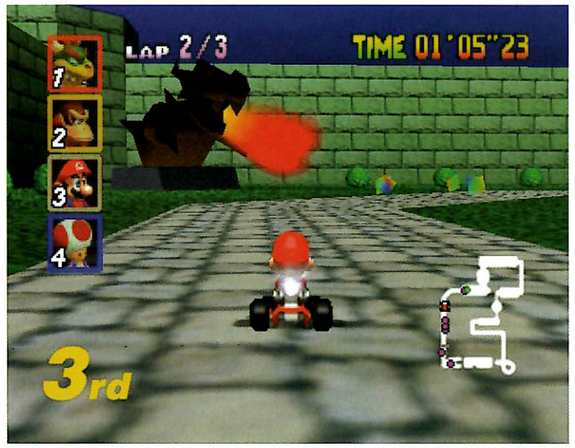
FLAT TYRES

On the other hand, no amount of 'mirror, sig manoeuvre' safety preparations would be en save the souls of those foolhardy enough to t luck on the renovated Rainbow Road circuit. unleashed Chain Chomps merrily munched t through the central reservation, taking out a anything in their path. Although some consid Rainbow Road to be the weakest of the lot (m because of the introduction of railings), you ignore the fact the Chain Chomps' ominous p left you constantly on edge – especially as yo knew one of the grinning spherical idiots wa be doing the rounds just as you steered into corner. It was more menacing than all the Th *Super Mario Kart* stacked on top of each oth proof, if proof was needed, that the technol advancements didn't just make Mario Kart a looking game – it made it a better game, full

Although the freedom of racing in a 3D la giddying at the time ("it's like you're actually game!", we bellowed to our mates when we clamped eyes on it in a Virgin Megastore de it's sobering to remember that Nintendo we working under tight memory constraints du

"MARIO KART'S FLAT-PACKED COURSES OF OLD EXPLODED INTO EPIC, 3D MASTERPIECES"

Before the advent of online leaderboards we'd send our times into magazines.



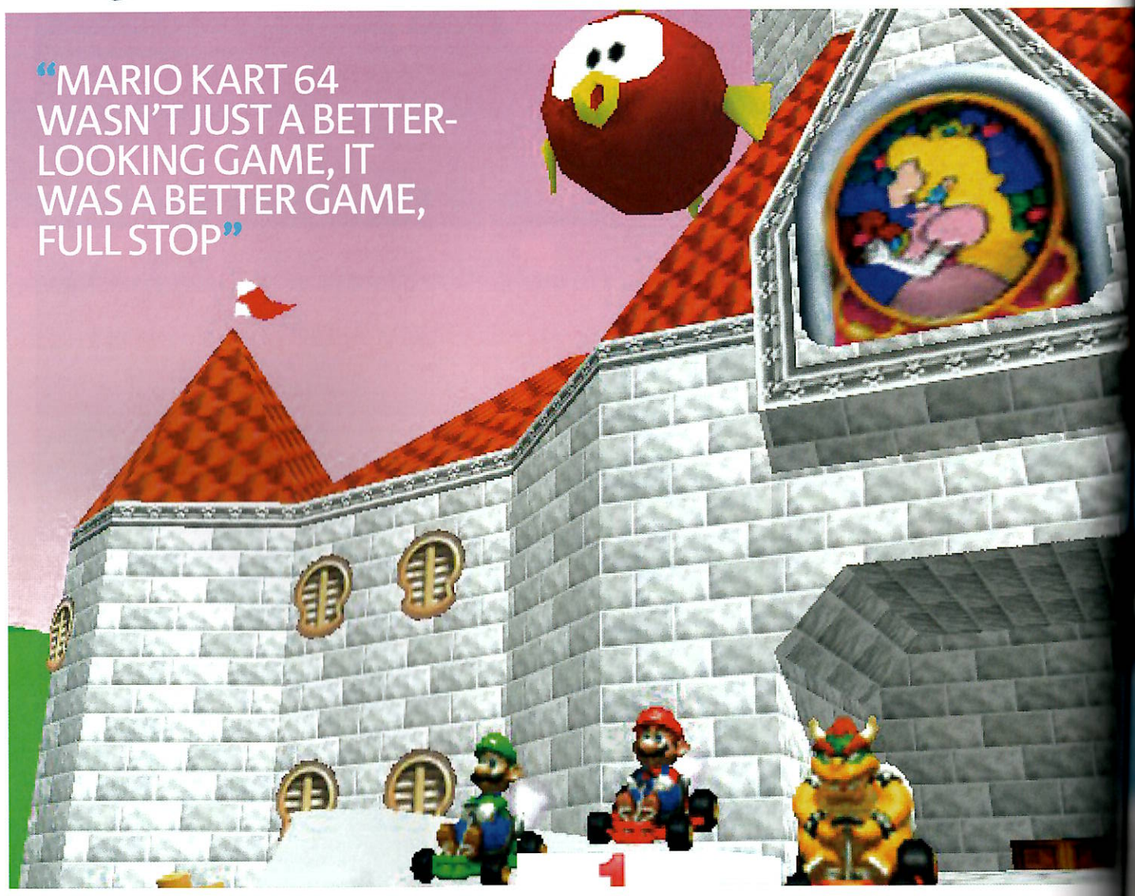
It's amazing how many of MK's rules became set in stone in this iteration - like so many N64 games.

Mario Kart 64 looks ugly as sin in screenshots, but back in 1997 this was as hot as it got. Honest.

PLAY IT NOW

Mario Kart 64 is available on Virtual Console on Wii (or through Wii mode on Wii U). You'll need to buy the Classic Controller to play it, though.

While the sprites ace in action, the ceremony reveal rough edges a lit more. Our poor



"MARIO KART 64 WASN'T JUST A BETTER-LOOKING GAME, IT WAS A BETTER GAME, FULL STOP"

Unlike later the Mario Karts there was huge potential for ruining another player's race with a well-timed item, such as sending them into the abyss as they try leaping a vital gap.

ROYAL RACEWAY
The largest speedway course, takes us around the contours of a gigantic lake in Peach's backyard. A leap at the end can make or break a race.

SHERBERT LAND
A wretchedly slippy ice circuit which takes you straight into the heart of a rocky cave populated by penguins seemingly made from granite.

"IT REMAINS A TIMELESS FOUR PLAYER GEM, EVEN TODAY IN 2014. LOOK NO FURTHER THAN MARIO KART 64"

limitations of the N64's cartridge format. This meant corners needed to be cut to ensure *MK64* could go at a decent speed with eight racers – and there was no quick fix mushroom to get them over this hump.

Unwilling to compromise on gameplay, director Hideki Konno and his team instead looked to N64 launch title *Super Mario 64* to see how that game conserved on memory – and struck gold when they came across a process known as 'billboarding'.

Billboarding is the practice of drawing a character from various angles and then putting them on flat boards so they can be animated. Using this process, you can have 2D objects existing in three-dimension worlds without anyone being any the wiser. *Mario 64*'s Koopa Troopas and Wigglers were drawn and animated this way, and so too were the racers in *Mario Kart 64*. The trick was so convincing that hardly anyone noticed at the time, and it saved enough memory space for Nintendo to offer up another new first for the series – simultaneous four-player action...

Wide courses and overly-aggressive rubberband AI make *Mario Kart 64* one of the weaker entries in the series from a single-player perspective, but when you plug in an extra three controllers, *MK64* undergoes a transformation of Cinderella proportions. *GoldenEye* is fondly remembered as being the split-screen N64 game of choice, but *Mario Kart 64* is a very close second, and let us tell you, that is no faint praise.

FATAL FOUR-WAY

The stubby battle courses of *Super Mario Kart* were replaced with multi-layered affairs so vast that radars were needed to help guide players. Meanwhile, the four-player races were always guaranteed to go down to the wire, thanks to *MK64*'s delicious knack of turning the standings on their head by giving a back marker a well-timed lightning or blue-shell attack.

It was superb stuff. No self-respecting university dorm would have been seen dead without a copy of *Mario Kart 64* in the late 1990s, and Team **ONM** still dust off the office N64 for a multiplayer session whenever a disagreement arises that can only be resolved by a red shell to the mush.

Like many other games from the early 3D era, *Mario Kart 64*'s visuals and framerate haven't aged gracefully. But it remains a timeless multiplayer gem all the same. Even today in 2014, if you're looking for a driving game that can seat four players around one screen, you should look no further than *Mario Kart 64*. It's the only game at the races. +

FORMAT GAME BOY ADVANCE OUT SEPTEMBER 2001 DEVELOPER INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Mario Kart: Super Circuit

Mario burns rubber in the palms of gamers' hands for the first time ever

WHAT IS IT

The first handheld game in the MK series, mixing bits of the SNES and N64 games to make one big Mario Kart pie.

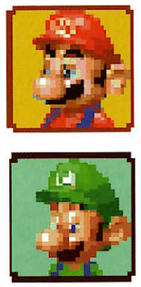
In the summer of 1996, rumours that Nintendo was working on a successor to the Game Boy started spreading. Project Atlantis, according to mags at the time, would have a "32-bit processor" and would enable you to play games that looked as good as those on the SNES, on the move. Nintendo fans' minds started racing as they thought about all the SNES games they might see ported over to Atlantis. As one of the most popular SNES games around, speculation grew about whether there'd be a new version of *Super Mario Kart* for this mysterious new handheld device. They would have to wait four years to find out. Nintendo finally revealed Atlantis, now known as the Game Boy Advance, to the public in August 2000. It was indeed as powerful as the SNES (and at times more so), and there would be a Mario Kart game on the way. It wouldn't be a simple port of Super Mario Kart though – it would be a brand new game, the third in the series.

The successor to the GBC, the GBA's 32-bit graphics wowed back in 2001.

MASSIVE HEADS

The first footage of *Mario Kart Advance* (as it was initially known) showed off a bold new art style, with super-deformed characters with massive heads and cartoony character portraits on the side of the screen. Over the following months however this art style changed and by the time the game launched in 2001 (with a new title for the west, *Mario Kart: Super Circuit*) the characters used the same, less exaggerated, sprites that were used in *Mario Kart 64*.

Super Circuit was an interesting mash-up of elements from *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64*. The gameplay engine was an enhanced version of the SNES games, with Mode 7-style graphics. It also used the same coin system in which players could race over coins lying on the track to collect them, increasing their top speed. This made for tactical racing, requiring players to keep alert on straights, rather than simply concentrating on handling the corners. This was the last time the coin system featured in a home M[illegible] game until it came back in *Mario Kart 7*.



Is it us, or do these two look a little drunk? It's really not cool to drink and kart, kids. Tsk.

With 40 tracks to choose from, *Super Circuit* remains the biggest Mario Kart game ever made.

Even though it shared this stuff with the SN[illegible] *Super Circuit* also had a lot of *Mario Kart 64* in [illegible] The character sprites are the same as those fr[illegible] latter, and it's the *Mario Kart 64* power-ups th[illegible] rather than the SNES ones. This meant the blu[illegible] and triple items were in, but the feather – the [illegible] item for shortcut hunters – was out.

When you first started up *Super Circuit* you [illegible] presented with four different cups, each con[illegible] four tracks. Do well in these and you unlock[illegible] cup with another four tracks, bringing the to[illegible] Some tracks remained exclusive to *Super Cir*[illegible] have never been seen since. Some of these [illegible] were similar to previous tracks in the series. [illegible] Park felt like the original game's Donut Plain[illegible] Cheep-Cheep Island was like other beach tra[illegible] it had large Cheep-Cheeps jumping around [illegible] background, and Snow Land looked like Sh[illegible] right down to the snowmen on the track.

CLASSIC TRACKS?

Some other tracks however had unique app[illegible] that haven't been recreated in any other Ma[illegible] since. Take Cheese Land, an odd space-base[illegible] level made entirely of cheddar, or the fancy [illegible] Road, with its long strip of red ribbon as the [illegible] large wrapped gifts in the background. The[illegible] Lakeside Park, a grassy area next to an acti[illegible] which erupted in the second lap and start[illegible] balls of lava on the course. They were all o[illegible]

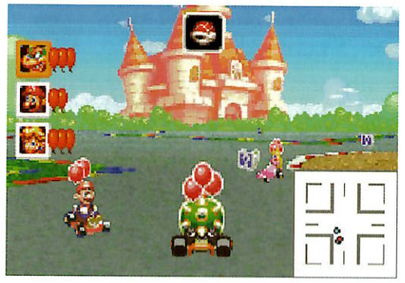
Every *Mario Kart* has its own Rainbow [illegible] and *Super Circuit* was no different. Set in the [illegible] Mario universe, this version was particular[illegible] not only were there jumps lining the edge[illegible] course, there were also falling stars that [illegible] to spin out if they hit them, as well as thun[illegible] that shrunk anyone who drove into them.

It wasn't these 20 tracks that *Super Circu*[illegible] known for, however. If a player managed [illegible] coins over the course of one of the game's [illegible] Extra Cup equivalent was made available [illegible] selection screen. Combined, the five Extra [illegible] contained all 20 tracks from the original [illegible] *Kart* on the SNES, meaning once they were [illegible] a grand total of 40 tacks were playable. Th[illegible] *Circuit* more tracks than any other game in [illegible] record that stands to this date. Its huge [illegible] tracks, impressive graphics and addictive [illegible] made *Super Circuit* a great advert for the [illegible] Advance on launch day. The GBA would [illegible] 81.5 million systems worldwide, but it wa[illegible] that gave the handheld a boost from the [illegible]

PLAY IT NOW

Mario Kart: Super Circuit is elusive. Find a second-hand cart and it'll work with a DS or DS Lite, but otherwise just pray for a VC release.

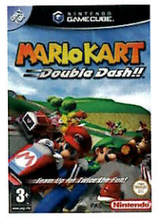
Battle mode was an absolute hoot with three friends. If only everyone had a link cable to play it. Gah!



"IT HAD MORE TRACKS THAN ANY GAME IN THE SERIES, A RECORD THAT STILL STANDS"

SUNSET WILDS
This Western-themed track was set in the desert and featured rocks in the background, plus the best sunset in Mario Kart history.

RIBBON ROAD
The huge presents in the background made it easy to get distracted and take your eye off some of the difficult jumps.



FORMAT GAMECUBE OUT NOVEMBER 2003 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Mario Kart: Double Dash!!

Two drivers in every vehicle made for a Mario Kart that was twice as nice

WHAT IS IT

What is it? The entry in which the series broke out from the established karting action featuring (or possibly endorsed by) Mario.

Where the heck did our karts go?" That was the question on everybody's lips when *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* sped out of the pits. That and, "What's the deal with this double-character nonsense?" "Hope Nintendo hasn't ruined Mario Kart," was something also whispered frequently prior to release. Oh, how naive we were...

DASH IT ALL

Hot on the wheels of GBA release *Mario Kart: Super Circuit*, *Double Dash!!*'s changes knocked everybody sideways like a Green Shell shot from a cannon. Whereas *Mario Kart 64* was a lightning-fast racer with action so quick some courses nearly sent us to the hospital with whiplash, *Double Dash!!* played out at much slower speeds. Initially the crawling pace felt like a step down from the polygon-pushing-power of the N64 version, but soon it became apparent that what *Double Dash!!* lacked in zip was made up for in design smarts and balancing.

Those vehicles first: what happened there? The obvious answer is that Mario Kart lost its karts through necessity: with two players per vehicle, the franchise had to branch out into new areas and so the wheeled barrels, trains and low riders were called upon. It took some getting used to the more car-ified constructs, but once it was accepted that the change in wheels didn't spoil the quintessential Mario Kart vibe (a trick they'd repeat with *Wii*'s bikes), the controversy was over.

As for the two characters, it proved to be a real inspired choice. At first the dual-driver mechanic appeared to be little more than a visual trick f[illegible] swapping between items. One person took th[illegible] steering wheel while the second clung to the [illegible] delivering taunts to fellow riders and using w[illegible] snaffled from item boxes.

With repeated play it was clear the ramific[illegible] racer selection went much deeper than simp[illegible] up items. Characters dictated car selection, w[illegible] turn decided how fast, manoeuvrable and p[illegible] you were on the track. With race-winning c[illegible] specific special items also appearing for this [illegible] this game only, striking up the right balance [illegible] was a vital first step towards securing a pod[illegible] There was of course the two-player/one-kar[illegible] multiplayer too, which completely changed [illegible] Mario Kart functioned with friends.

GREAT SNAKES

An improved handling model was brought [illegible] with the new vehicles. Or, to be more prec[illegible] improved drifting model. Squeezing one o[illegible] GameCube pad's triggers threw your vehic[illegible] slide and caused sparks to spray out from [illegible] chassis. Normally that'd be a good indicati[illegible] time to call a mechanic (we know Mario's g[illegible] pipes and plumbing, but seeing how he tr[illegible] vehicles we'd rather not let him tinker und[illegible] but in *Double Dash!!* it was the beginning [illegible] phenomenon known as SSMT (Straight Str[illegible] Mini-Turbo). Or, to use its more popular n[illegible]

Clack-clack clack-clack clack-clack: the [illegible] sound of an analogue whipping back and f[illegible]

How did Nintendo squeeze so much fun on to those tiny GameCube discs? A minor miracle!

Thanks to two man karts you got twice as much Koopa Troopa for your money. Er, thanks?

We were never crazy about the barrel cannon. Did the racing for you.

PLAY IT NOW

Double Dash!! can bought second hand, but you'll need a Wii – or, indeed, a GameCube – to play it. Well worth it for the brilliant balloon battles, mind.

"WHAT IT
[illegible]CKED IN ZIP IT
[illegible]ADE UP FOR
[illegible]MARTS AND
[illegible]AR PERFECT
[illegible]LANCING"

We spent more time playing Battle mode at uni than we did working.

The ability to see what items your rivals hold returns in *Mario Kart 8*.

The game arguably looks better than Mario Kart Wii. Gotta love all those bright colours.

TOP OF THE TRACKS

YOSHI CIRCUIT
The Yoshi-shaped course has a water-jump shortcut and an underground path accessed by mushrooming over hazards.

DK MOUNTAIN
Its most iconic feature is the giant cannon that shoots you to the top of the mountain, ready for a rapid descent among rolling boulders.

"IT BECAME ONE OF THE GO-TO TITLES FOR THE GAMECUBE AND ITS STOCK HAS ONLY RISEN"

mark of an expert *Double Dash!!*-er at work. Hurling the vehicle into a drift, whipping the stick out-of and then back-into the slide three times so those sparks turned from gold-to-orange-to-blue, and finally releasing the drift to activate a mini-turbo boost, meant people could slingshot themselves around even the tightest of corners without sacrificing speed.

But the art of snaking saw us use the techniques on straight pieces of track like a bona fide boa constrictor, and repeatedly mini-turboing from side to side for the all-important speed boosts.

DOUBLE BONUS

Though the technique first raised its head in *Mario Kart 64* it wasn't until *Double Dash!!*'s Time Trials that it became a major part of the overall series. Without *Mario Kart 64*'s pre-drift kart-hopping to slow the manoeuvre down, players were able to take advantage of the speed quirk, in the same way that expert *GoldenEye* players moved in diagonal strafes to out-pace the competition.

Crucially, however, one of *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*'s biggest boosts of all came from the hardware itself. The GameCube's extra processing oomph over that of the N64 enabled Nintendo to create tracks that had stunningly beautiful visuals as well as gorgeous course maps. Along with *Super Smash Bros. Melee*, *F-Zero GX* and *TimeSplitters 2*, it became one of the go-to titles for all GameCube multiplayer fans, and with time its stock has only risen. +

FORMAT NINTENDO DS OUT NOVEMBER 2005 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Mario Kart DS

The game that started Nintendo's online revolution

"MARIO KART DS TURNED OU TO BE ONE OF THE MOST SATISFYING MARIO KARTS IN AGES. PHEW

WHAT IS IT

The second portable Kart dragged the series into the online realm. With a little help from the Wi-Fi dongle a world of competitive delights awaited. Vroom.

The Jumpman and the Birdman. These were the stars of the first two Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection games, though *Mario Kart DS* – aptly – pipped *Tony Hawk's American Sk8land* at the post. Certainly, this game seemed to have a lot of drive behind its driving; the public reaction to *Double Dash!!* was a touch mixed (people warmed to it in later years), and consequently the illustrious racing series needed to redeem itself a little, and remind people that it could indeed hit the spot that *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64* thwacked so accurately.

There were ominous indications beforehand, though, that Nintendo wasn't really thinking about this. The main things producer (and *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64* director) Hideki Konno seemed to want to talk about in interviews was getting Mario Kart online, and making sure up to eight people could play a local game wirelessly – worthy goals, of course, but pointless if the game itself wasn't up to par.

PAR FOR THE COURSES

It was, therefore, delightful to find that the game itself was up to par. Phew. In fact, *Mario Kart DS*, quite casually, turned out to be one of the most satisfying Mario Karts in ages. The additions here were splendidly tasteful – among other things, there's a new touchscreen map, which doesn't just display the racers but the obstacles (consequently enabling you to weave your way through rebounding shells and avoid invincible racers approaching from behind).

But the most important thing was that they absolutely nailed the underlying game. The handling, for instance, is like a tight halfway house 'tween the

If you had a DS chances are you had *Mario Kart DS*. It was pretty much an essential purchase.

That dress will get filthy sitting on a bonnet like that, unless this is some new cleaning technique?

Mario is so vain he's had his name put all over the track. Such grotesque ego.

PLAY IT NOW

Mario Kart DS is still readily available for DS and can be played on the 3DS, thanks to the magic power of backward compatibility. So why are you not playing it right now?

Mario there, demonstrating the very worst way to drive a kart. That'd be an instant fail in a driving test.

TOP OF THE TRACKS

WALUIGI PINBALL
A joyous sprawl o' slopes and surprises, where the boosts burble with a swirl of electronic sounds and giant pinballs ominously pursue you.

TICK-TOCK CLOCK
A corking track full of pendulous obstacles. It also proves that *SM64*'s passed the Nostalgia Barrier – we were pleased to see TT Clock return.

BOWSER CASTLE
One of the best Bowser Castl
The obstacles are corking. We
the rotating tube, which has a
of suddenly changing directio

It looks a little basic compared to Karts *7* and *8*, but *DS* pushed its host hardware really hard. In context, it was a real looker.

original *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64* (wait, hold on, that sounds a bit like a euphemism – "He punched me in the tight halfway house...").

The swervy drifts of Mario Kart: Double Dash!! have been replaced by something a little meatier, with your kart crunching satisfyingly around the bends in the courses, and the pleasingly techniquey 'hop' manoeuvre has returned – albeit without the ability to daringly circumvent banana skins at the last second (wait, hold on. "He punched me in the swervy drifts..." and so on and so forth).

TICK TOCK: YOU DON'T STOP

And the tracks are similarly well-tuned. Traditional raceways jostle alongside the more spectacular, gimmick-led tracks, though the snappy controls ensure that even the wildest flights of fancy work as solid courses in their own right.

The (surprisingly) welcome return of Tick-Tock Clock has birthed a tricksy series of suspended pathways patrolled by sweeping pendulums and spinning gears; Peach's garden is now a series of stony courtyards and neatly snipped hedgerows, a-clutter with unbound Chain Chomps; Airship Fortress thrusts you onto the screeching, suspended decks of a boss level from *Super Mario Bros. 3*; and an Angry Sun spins its
from the skybox in Desert Hills to rain *Super Ma*
3-flavoured fireballs into the scorching sand. O
wonders, in fact, why the Mario Kart series ne
thought to reference older games in the Mario
before – they've traditionally been a blend of o
creations and up-to-date references.

RIDGE RACING

Anyway, the less ambitious tracks also work re
Mario Circuit's a sound bundle o' swerves, Sh
Ridge is the best Toad's Turnpike-style track ye
even a simple track like Yoshi Falls has an inter
idea running through it.

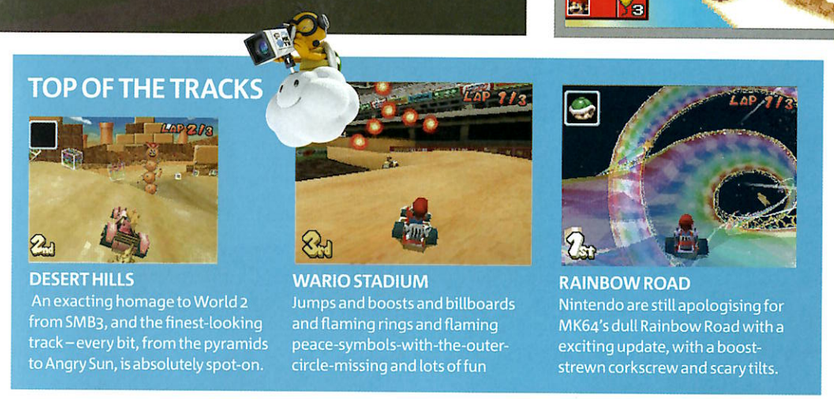
But that's not all. In a feat of hitherto-unthi
generosity, the devs filled the rest of the cart w
of Best Of... collection of existing Mario Kart t
meaning you're never more than a brief butto
squidge away from one of your old favourite

The pick 'n' mix nature of the tracks means t
retro cup has its own personality, too, with tra
say, Super Circuit nestling alongside ones fro
Kart: Double Dash!! You know, beneath that c
touchscreen, the lovely thing about the DS wa
was essentially 'The N64 Again'. Launch game

Yoshi Falls is a classic track, with a quicker inside track bringing you dangerously close to the edge.

"EVEN A SIMPLE TRACK LIKE YOSHI FALLS HAS AN INTERESTING IDEA RUNNING THROUGH IT"

"THE NICEST THING ABOUT THIS GAME, THOUGH, IS THAT IT'S SO VERY EAGER TO PLEASE"



Mario 64 DS was, in some senses, a better tribute to the fuzzy days ofyore than the superslick Smash Bros. series, because Nintendo was able to create a clutch of (really charming) bonus levels that almost exactly mirrored the N64 originals.

JAGGED GLORY

Mario Kart DS, though, was an even better tribute, because here they were able to render a whole new game in that warmly jaggedy N64-o-vision, and the effect was much like playing a long-lost sequel to the Game of your Childhood. Two-dimensional Goomba sprites strut crabwise across the tracks like enchanted cardboard; Mario's nose tapers to an earnest point; and the buildings in Delfino Square are literally that. Also, there's something almost aggressively retro about turning shiny modern tracks like Yoshi Circuit into less shiny, faux-ancestral versions. It's revisionism of the cosiest sort. Retrovisionism.

The nicest thing about this game, though, is that it's so very eager to please. After *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* perhaps toyed a little too loosely with the format, Konno's actual brief appears to have been: "Let's take all the best elements from the previous games, and play it straight. Let's reinstate the classic karts, but let people use character karts if they prefer. Let's finally dust down Block Fort, and make the Triple Green Shells power-up orbit your racer again.

BALANCING ACT

Let's work on the balance so that it's not quite as fickle as Double Dash!! And let's forget to pop in an explorable Peach's Castle adjunct, *à la Mario Kart 64*'s Royal Raceway, even though we really should get around to doing that again, because, hey, we should probably remind people we're human." Do you know what, Reggie? *Mario Kart DS* is my father's Mario Kart. And it's much better for it. +

FORMAT Wii OUT APRIL 2008 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Mario Kart Wii

Nintendo brings karting (and biking) to the masses

WHAT IS IT

Mario Kart Wii was designed with total beginners in mind. The packaged-in Wii Wheel meant that if you had hands and a pair of eyes, you could take your place on the grid.

A total eclipse of the kart? Not quite, but very nearly so. On Wii, the titular karts which had carried Mario to so many victories were suddenly forced to take a backseat thanks to the emergence of a new carriage of choice: motorbikes! When Nintendo first announced that bikes would be lining up alongside the usual menagerie of karts, prams and barrels-on-wheels, the Mario Kart fanbase looked on with quiet reservations.

Would the motorbikes somehow unbalance the gameplay? Would it still feel like a Mario Kart game? Would you be able to use showboating wheelies? Is there even a bike in the world strong enough to withstand the stress of Wario's wide load?

All those worries disappeared as soon as Wii owners fished the pristine white Wii Wheel out of *Mario Kart Wii*'s oversized box and began racing. Not only did the bikes fit into Mario Kart's world as naturally as a mushroom in Mario's big ol' mouth, but they were one of several additions that combined to make this edition what is, arguably, the ultimate Mario Kart experience, for beginners and veterans alike.

Wii Wheels: cluttering up living room floors since April 2008. Good stuff.

STEERS FOR FEARS

Mario Kart Wii is defined by its level playing field. Much like the Wii console itself, the game was designed to attract new audiences to Mario Kart's charms, and then offer them an environment that allowed them to compete on equal terms with those who had been following the series since the early nineties.

In order to accomplish this, Nintendo first needed to identify what the barriers were exactly that were preventing 'non-gamers' from joining in on the racing carnage – because after all, flinging a banana into Bowser's crusty fizzog is pretty much the definition of 'universal pleasure'. The answer came to long time

Does Koopa Troopa feel conflicted when he throws a shell of a fallen comrade?

PLAY IT NO

Mario Kart Wi
available just
everywhere a
be played on W
thanks to its
handy backw
compatibility
for getting in
practice befor
Mario Kart 8

"WITH MK WII NINTENDO WANTED THE CONTROLLER TO BE THE WHEEL ITSELF"

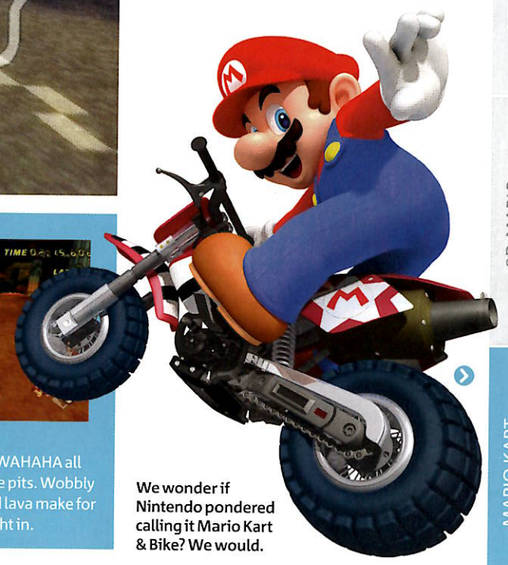
Tricks have become a part of the furniture. Pull one off as you go over a jump or a bump to get a sneaky burst of speed. Vital in the time trials.

TOP OF THE TRACKS

MUSHROOM GORGE
It's this track in the easy-peasy Mushroom Cup? It's a nightmare! Everything goes wrong from bouncy clouds to it's curtains...

MAPLE TREEWAY
Lots of obstacles and hazards to trip you up here, but strangely the most difficult bit is the evil middle stretch, where Wigglers form a roadblock.

BOWSER'S CASTLE
Why does Bowser's BWAHAHA all the time? His pad is the pits. Wobbly hallways, fireballs and lava make for an uncomfortable night in.



We wonder if Nintendo pondered calling it Mario Kart & Bike? We would.

"A B BUTTON EXTENSION IN THE REAR MADE DRIFTING AS EASY AS PIE"

Mario Kart producer, Hideki Konno during a family gathering. As he recalls: "When we made *Mario Kart DS*, my parents tried to play it together with their grandchild, but it was difficult for them to use the Control Pad. They were saying, "This is hard!" I thought that was really too bad... It really drove home the need to make it even more user-friendly".

The solution was to simplify the controls, but in such a way that Mario Kart could retain its hidden depths. They already had a great base to work from; the motion-sensing Wii remote had been designs with ease of use in mind, and early titles such as *Excite Truck* found success with a control scheme that required you to tilt the remote like a steering wheel. But Nintendo wanted to go one step further with *Mario Kart Wii*. They wanted the controller to be the steering wheel.

As Shigeru Miyamoto explained: "A steering wheel is so easy to understand. Almost everyone has the experience of using some kind of steering wheel, from riding toy cars with pedals as children, to driving real go karts at a theme park. Everyone knows how to turn the wheel right in order to go right". And so the Wii Wheel was born; as comfortable to hold in your hands as a fluffy kitten and complete with a giant B button extension on the rear to make drifting as easy as pie.

FAMILY FRENZY

The Wii Wheel was so intuitive to use that it instantly unlocked the wacky world of Mario Kart to a new generation of gamers. For newcomers looking to ease themselves in, an optional basic control scheme took complicated techniques such as drifting out of the equation entirely, freeing their brain up to concentrate on steering and firing off the odd Bob-omb. It made everything easy for granddad – up until he got a few races in and ended up being unceremoniously gobbled up by Mushroom Gorge's pit of death, that is.

Expert players weren't left disenfranchised. *Mario Kart Wii* supported numerous control systems besides the Wii wheel, ranging from the Wii remote and nunchuk to the GameCube controller. Analogue sticks naturally offered more precision than the Wii Wheel, but Nintendo had a crafty way of encouraging veterans to exit their comfort zone and brave the motion controls. Players who used the Wii Wheel online a certain number of times would have a 'wheel' icon appear besides their name. If they continued to use it

"FOR THE FIRST TIME, MK PLAYERS WERE ABLE TO SHARE LAP TIMES WITH THE WORLD"

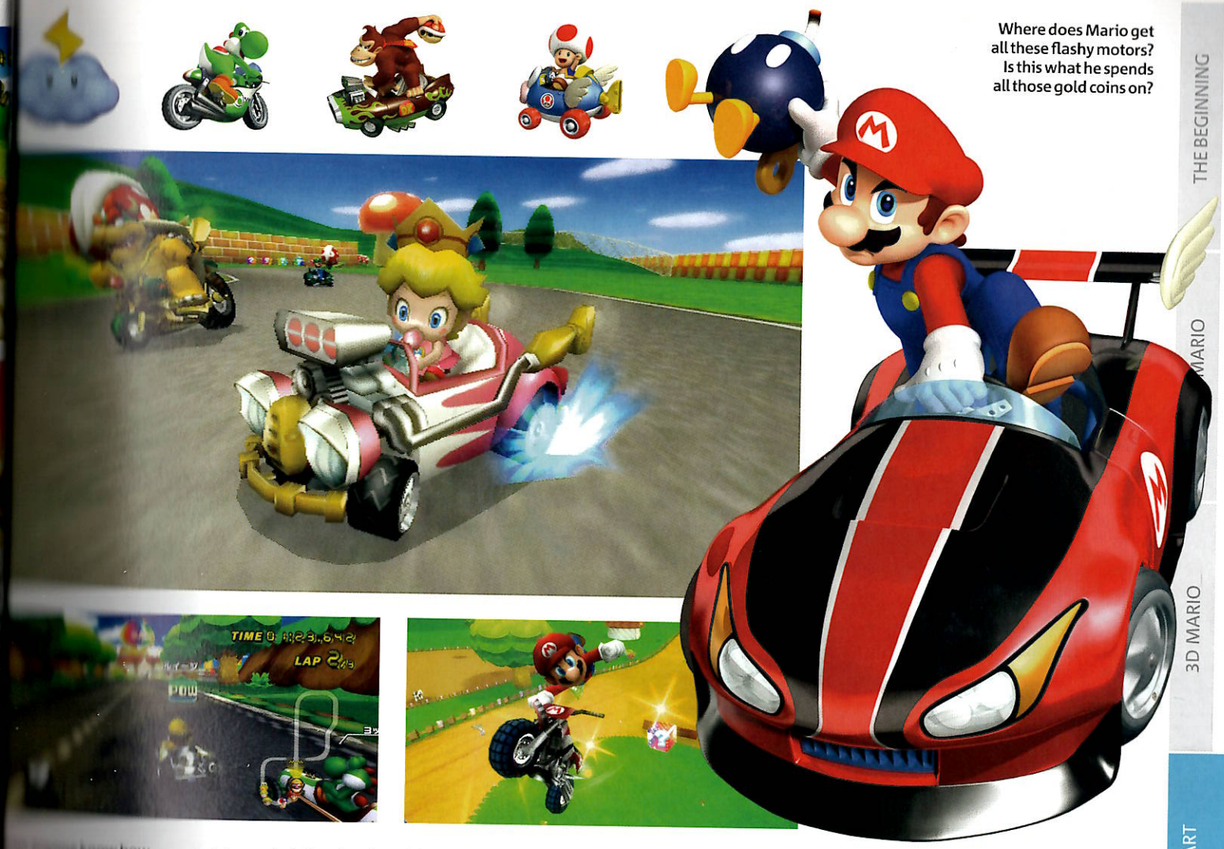
TOP OF THE TRACKS

GRUMBLE VOLCANO
Of course, this race would be safer if they'd waited until the volcano was no longer active, but that just isn't how the Mario Kart crew roll, is it?

WARIO'S GOLD MINE
As if the lack of railings and bat hailstorms weren't enough, you've also got to contend with mine carts veering wildly across the tracks too.

KOOPA CAPE
Up the mountain, down a waterfall and straight into an underground pipe co-habited by vicious electrical sparks. You know: the usual.

As well as letting you play as your Mii, Mar
Wii will import the bobble-headed avatar
Mii Channel and hide them in track-side de
From giant statues topped with your dad's
noggin to billboards depicting Mii Darth V
serenading Princess Peach, this is a comic



Where does Mario get all these flashy motors? Is this what he spends all those gold coins on?

know how
think actually
players on a
please

uninterrupted, the wheel would turn gold. It was like a badge of honour for top players – as if to say 'I'm so good, I can beat you using the Wii Wheel'.

WHEELIE GOOD

With a fair wind, a good *Mario Kart Wii* player would always beat a bad one, but tweaks to the weapon balancing and an increase in racers from eight to 12 meant that the outlook was always stormy. Bullet Bills would launch lagging players from last place to the middle of the pack in seconds; blue shells would fall on the leaders' heads like hailstones. Regardless of your skill level, there was no situation unsalvageable; no lead too big to blow. Does this mean that there's no skill involved? Not at all! Although fate plays a bigger part in determining the final standings than it does in other Mario Kart games, for experts the challenge comes in taking the misfortune on the chin and finding a way back to the top. This is where the motorbikes come back into play. Compared side-by-side with the karts, the bikes seem pretty rubbish at first glance. Their mini-turbos aren't nearly as powerful, and if the two collide it's the lighter bike that goes flying off into the path of the nearest Chain-Chomp while the kart thunders off to the finish line.

But bikes do hold one major advantage – they can perform wheelies on straights. Doing so leaves them super-vulnerable, but the karts have no answer to the speed boost it brings. The bikes were the connoisseur's choice of vehicle and online was their playground. The advent of Wi-Fi meant that for the first time, players could share their lap times with the entire world, making for the most competitive time trialling in the series' history. Then you had the races, which would pair you up with similarly-skilled racers from across the globe, so a fresh challenge was never far away.

ON YER BIKE

Selling 28 million copies worldwide (more than *Super Mario Kart*, *Mario Kart 64* and *mario Kart: Super Circuit* put together), *Mario Kart Wii* achieved its aim of bringing the series to a new, wider audience. But its real genius is that it did so without losing its competitive streak, largely due to the inclusion of motorbikes. Looking back, it's hard to believe we ever worried about them, isn't it? +

FORMAT NINTENDO 3DS OUT DECEMBER 2011 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD/RETRO PUBLISHER NINTENDO

Mario Kart 7

Neither land, sea nor air can stop Mario's march to greatness

WHAT IS IT

The seventh Mario Kart outing is presented in stereoscopic 3D on Nintendo's latest handheld console.

Mario Kart 7's best bit? Wiggler, hands down. One of four all-new racers, the cantankerous caterpillar makes for a peculiar sight crammed into a tiny egg-shaped kart with spongy bee-wheels (we'll explain that later). But fire a red shell in his direction and that's when the real magic happens.

After spinning out, his complexion turns a brilliant red and he throws a wobbler in his kart, complete with train whistle sound effect. Brilliant! We'll settle for eighth place every single time as long as we get to see the sight of his little gloved arms flailing in impotent rage at least once per race. It's absolutely the best thing about *Mario Kart 7*, hands down.

3DS gave us the deepest Kart yet. And not just in the stereoscopic sense.

GO TOTALLY PIRANHAS

Ooh, but then again, the Star Cup's opening race, Piranha Plant Pipeway, is pretty special, come to think of it. It begins unpromisingly enough – the starting grid leads directly into a sewer. But in the Mushroom Kingdom, sewers are fantastical lands of piranha plants and warp zones, and so our gang find themselves racing through a perfect replica of *Super Mario Bros.*' underground World 1-2. It's a cave story which culminates in a death-defying run across a wafer-thin row of question blocks.

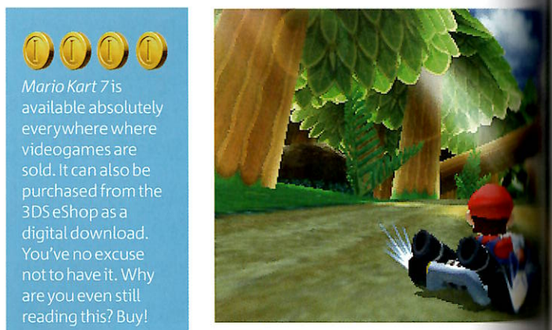
Although if you tumble off (and believe you us, you certainly will be doing plenty of that) it's not necessarily the end. There are more multiple pathways here than in any of the previous six Mario Karts, so you can often dust yourself off and try again on a lower level. Best bit of the game, that.

Wait, wait, wait, hang on a moment, we've got it all wrong. That isn't even the best bit from Piranha Plant Pipeway. That particular accolade goes to the moment when you're spat out of the cavern and are sent flying towards a 3D rendition of *Super Mario Bros.*' end-of-

Gliders gave the game a swooping freedom brilliantly copied in *MK8*.

Time Trials give you three boost mushrooms to help nail otherwise impossible shortcuts. Tricky stuff.

"WE'LL SETTLE FOR EIGHTH PLACE IF WE GET TO SEE WIGGLER FLAIL HIS ARMS"



If only this mag came with a depth slider to allow the screens to be viewed in their stereoscopic glory.

Mario Kart 7 is available absolutely everywhere where videogames are sold. It can also be purchased from the 3DS eShop as a digital download. You've no excuse not to have it. Why are you even still reading this? Buy!

TOP OF THE TRACKS

PIRANHA PLANT PIPEWAY
This brings the *SMB* World 1-2 memories flowing back – but we don't remember the piranha plants being quite this vicious on NES...

MELODY MOTORWAY
This runs through a town made of music. Corners made of keyboard, jumps made of tambourine and hazards made of vast musical notes.

ALPINE PASS
This is just as memorable for its wide-open jumps as its bat-ta caves. Use a glider when you c soar past the competition.

Being able to see your rivals' weapons on the bottom screen map is a major boon. Best stay away from all those Red Shell-hoarding gits.

level castle. Of course, you no longer relinquish control when you're airborne – your paragliding equipment automatically deploys, allowing you to swoop gracefully to your destination (assuming a Red Shell doesn't send you crashing down to earth with a bump – weapons are still live in play). There are also coins to collect which increase your top speed as in the original *Super Mario Kart* – but let's hyperventilate over one best-bit at a time, huh?

Like the underwater bits – now they're something worth getting the bends over. Plunging into deep pools of water no longer ends with you waiting around for the AA man to fish you out – a propeller sprouts out of the back of your kart, allowing you to carry on driving unabated on the sea bed (albeit with some pretty wild handling).

CHEEP AND CHEERFUL

When you first get your wheels wet in Cheep-Cheep Cape you'll notice that the local pondlife has already evolved to welcome the new traffic; clams lay in wait with coins and item boxes dangling seductively in their gobs. Approach them at the wrong time and – SNAP!

Now, that's the best bit of *Mario Kart 7*, no dou it, it stands to reason.

Except, of course, it isn't. The best bit has to amount of effort that has been put into rewor retro tracks to work alongside the new paragl submarine-y bits. As an example, the piping in *Kart Wii*'s Koopa Cape is now completely floo with water and with a cheep-cheep army that towards you in eye-poking 3D.

That's the best bit of the game, right there, better still is the extra graphical flourish that showered onto the remade SNES Rainbow Ro won't spoil it for you – just rest assured that Best. Bit. Ever.

SEVENTH HEAVEN

But why fawn over the old when the new co fervently imaginative? If there's a bit of *Mario* that we love more than drifting round Melody Motorway's percussion bends – with each in turn as you pass over it – then we haven't

And we reckon we've seen everything it offer. Dozens of times. The Time Trials – po

Extra allow for some pushing thanks pre-set phrases.

All the onlooking Shy Guys are incredibly jealous of our karting star. What makes him so special?

"THE EXTRA GRAPHICAL FLOURISH ON THE REMADE RAINBOW ROAD IS THE BEST BIT"

Metal Mario thinks he's all that, but there's no risk of regular, flesh Mario rusting, is there?

The little hop that launches a drift put a stop to most players' more brazen snaking habits. Of course, some people are abnormally good.

"EVEN TRACKS DESIGNED FOR PURE COMIC MAYHEM STAND UP AS WORTHY CHALLENGES"

"AND THE BEST BIT OF ALL? WIGGLER. HE GETS SO ANGRY!"

The tracks seemed to have more flavour to them than in other games. Blame Retro.

Team ONM once competed in a games media time trial challenge on this track. Would you believe us if we said we took first prize. Don't laugh!

Kart 7's best bit – have kept us plugging away at it long after the Grands Prix were won. This is where the kart customisation, superfluous during the races, becomes one of the game's best bits – that egg shaped kart or those bee-wheels could be the ticket to shaving an extra few hundredths off your lap time, finally nudging you ahead of the brilliantly-calibrated expert ghost data times. Not to mention that you'll be getting a steady influx of new times to beat via StreetPass.

SHROOM WITH A VIEW

It's testament to Nintendo's mindboggling versatility that tracks designed for comedic mayhem also stand up as worthy challenges in their own right. It'll probably be quicker if we just name all the parts that aren't one of the best bits.

Hmm. Okay, the Grands Prix are still slightly on the easy side, although a win is never guaranteed in 150cc. The Blue Shell is still a bit of a game wrecker, and then there's Mushroom-bloody-Gorge. But those are minor hen-pecks that can't make a dent in a rock solid kart racing package. And the best bit of it all? Wiggler. Definitely. Maybe. He gets so angry! +

Mario's driving on the ceiling, Donkey Kong's on the wall and a Piranha Plant's vying for the Blue Shell's job. Say hello to the **Mario Kart** that's breaking all the rules...

Defying Gravity

"TRUST US, YOU HAVE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS IN A MARIO KART GAME BEFORE"

Baby Mario races inside the hollowed-out corpse of a *3D Land* Biddybud. Eww.

There's a reason most consoles launch with a racing game. Their minuscule, oval worlds, travelled over at high speeds and with huge concentration, don't need much work. The only part you care about is that aerodynamic set of mass-produced metal sheets in the dead centre of the screen, gleaming and polygon-ed up the wazoo (or exhaust pipe, if you want to get technical about it).

Most don't even bother to render an actual driver inside the vehicle, giving the uneasy impression that these games are set in some terrible future in which cars, upon becoming self-aware, see humans as obsolete, run them all over and go for a little spin around the Nürburgring to celebrate.

It's the easiest – and laziest – way to show off a new console's processing power; who cares whether the version of sunny Monaco you're speeding around looks more like post-siege Leningrad? That Subaru Impreza looks so good in the middle, there. There's a reason, then, that Wii U didn't launch with *Mario Kart 8*: perhaps more so than in any of the storied series' other instalments, you'll want to be looking at those surrounding worlds as much as possible.

FALLS GUYS

Take new track, Shy Guy Falls. As you take up a starting position behind the shoulders of your chosen cyber-celeb, you'll notice something beyond the startling cliff bluff ahead. Twin waterfalls crash down from some out-of-sight mountaintop, one carrying endless streams of shimmering, red boost pads down with it. But you won't see that again for a while.

Taking a sharp left down your own mountain, you'll buzz past Shy Guys in the midst of catastrophic mining operations and strain your eyes at adverts for Mushroom Kingdom-themed businesses (we're still not sure whether Burning DK is an energy drink or some kind of 'sensitive' ointment), all while negotiating the familiarly zippy, occasionally zappy Mario Kart experience. Then those waterfalls rise back into view. As you speed towards one on the right, you realise that, not unlike a bear hunt, there's no getting around it or through it – you must get over it. The narrow, cobalt-blue strip that indicates the game's new anti-gravity sections, you're suddenly charging vertically up the thing, careering past those falling boost pads while flecks of water hit the camera view. Reaching the top, a short straight track indicates a U-turn and then you're plunging down the second falls, towards a gigantic [illegible] inhabited, ominously, by some circling [illegible] before hitting another ramp, taking off and back on dry, flat land. Trust us: you've never [illegible] anything like this in a Mario Kart game before.

It's undoubtedly the best of the eight new [illegible] we've played (eight more are promised on [illegible] including the Sunshine Airport and Bone [illegible] course we've seen in previous trailers), a [illegible] spectacular ride that's often more like your [illegible] viciously competitive rollercoasters than [illegible] and quads. Shy Guy Falls is by no means the [illegible] trick *MK8* has up its flapping, windswept [illegible] though. In fact, almost every one we've [illegible] thrilling change in style, [illegible] out of your seat and into the [illegible] delighted player.

Shy Guy Falls (above) is an instant favourite: driving up a waterfall and gliding off the other side is ace.

You've never seen MK track design this dense and detailed. It really is the Wii U's finest visual hour.

LUDUS GALACTICUS

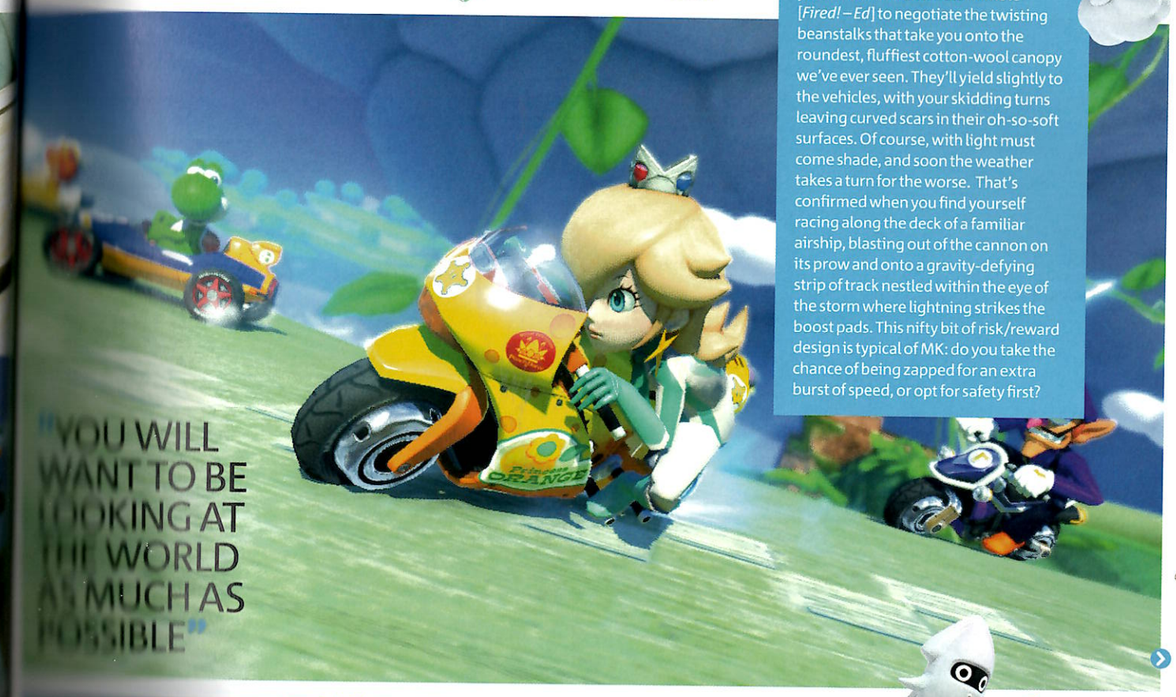
[illegible] increasingly looking like *Mario Kart* [illegible] *Super Mario Galaxy* of the series. Think of [illegible] Nintendo took everything that [illegible] chucked in a bucketful of fresh [illegible] it off with a new gravitational [illegible] everything we've seen so far suggests [illegible] Bunny and co are set to repeat the [illegible]

[illegible] of the series itself: every time Mario [illegible] of going around in circles, [illegible] that changes the rules. In [illegible] at one this time around: [illegible] turn it over at one end and [illegible] Hey presto: you've just [illegible] it's a single-surface, [illegible] that, coincidentally, Nintendo has appropriated both for the signature track, Mario Circuit, and the game's logo.

Just as your tiny paper track will confound your mind, the game's mechanical method for dealing with that twist confounds the laws of physics themselves: it's anti-gravity. Karts and bikes have wheels that automatically reorient themselves, allowing Mario and chums to stick to the track, no matter which way up they are. You'll pass an upside-down castle before realising it's actually you who is resisting gravity's insistent pull and not those pink-tipped towers.

CLIMBING THE WALLS

It's a classic Mario Kart addition. Drawing on years of experience honing a now almost instinctual control style, and adding mechanics from several recent games – it nabs *Mario Kart 7*'s gliders and underwater racing and puts them alongside the bikes, ramps and stunts pinched from *Mario Kart Wii*, not to mention *Super Mario Kart*'s coin-powered engine speed – it's the floating, frictionless icing on the cake, throwing in

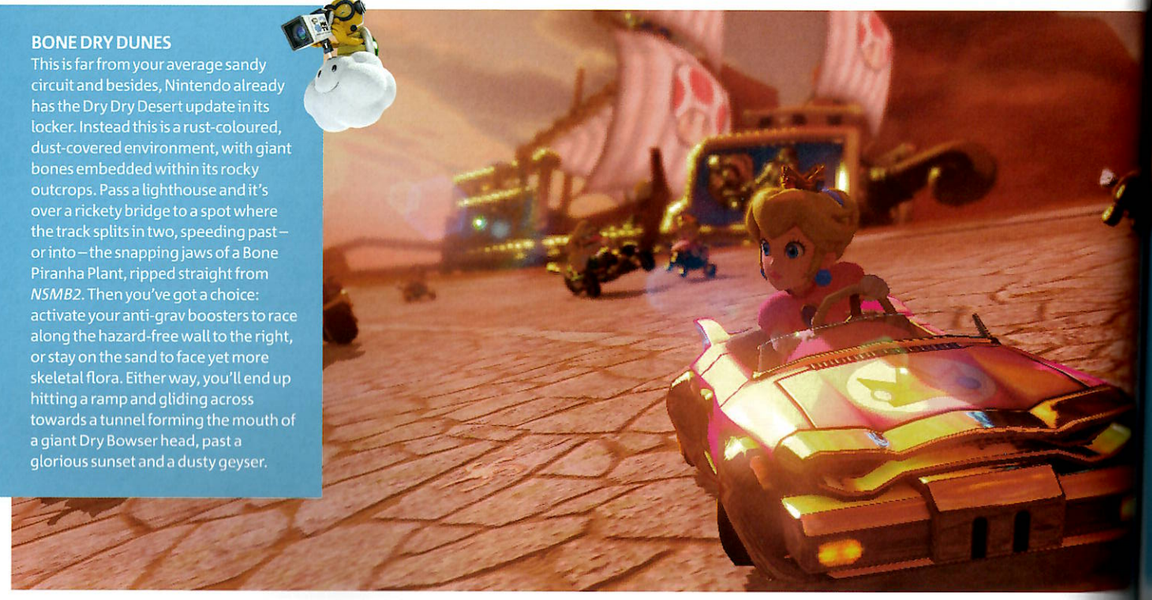


"YOU WILL WANT TO BE LOOKING AT THE WORLD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE"

CLOUDTOP CRUISE

The prettiest track of the lot so far, you'll need to be cumulo-nimble *[Fired! – Ed]* to negotiate the twisting beanstalks that take you onto the roundest, fluffiest cotton-wool canopy we've ever seen. They'll yield slightly to the vehicles, with your skidding turns leaving curved scars in their oh-so-soft surfaces. Of course, with light must come shade, and soon the weather takes a turn for the worse. That's confirmed when you find yourself racing along the deck of a familiar airship, blasting out of the cannon on its prow and onto a gravity-defying strip of track nestled within the eye of the storm where lightning strikes the boost pads. This nifty bit of risk/reward design is typical of MK: do you take the chance of being zapped for an extra burst of speed, or opt for safety first?

BONE DRY DUNES
This is far from your average sandy circuit and besides, Nintendo already has the Dry Dry Desert update in its locker. Instead this is a rust-coloured, dust-covered environment, with giant bones embedded within its rocky outcrops. Pass a lighthouse and it's over a rickety bridge to a spot where the track splits in two, speeding past – or into – the snapping jaws of a Bone Piranha Plant, ripped straight from *NSMB2*. Then you've got a choice: activate your anti-grav boosters to race along the hazard-free wall to the right, or stay on the sand to face yet more skeletal flora. Either way, you'll end up hitting a ramp and gliding across towards a tunnel forming the mouth of a giant Dry Bowser head, past a glorious sunset and a dusty geyser.



"ANTI-GRAV IS A SUBTLE GIMMICK, BUT YOU'LL GASP WHEN YOU SEE IT FOR THE FIRST TIME"

a layer of pure, oh-my-god grandeur into the design.

This is visible in the retro courses more than anywhere. Having played eight of the 16 planned for the final version, it's clear that Nintendo EAD is no longer happy simply revising fan favourites: each one more than matches its HD upgrade with ideas – some subtle, some less so – that change how it plays out.

That's clearest in the new version of the GBA edition's Mario Circuit. While the simple blacktop-and-grass style remains, there's one key difference: an entire corner chunk of the track is raised at an angle by hydraulic pistons, as if an alien mothership has attempted some unconvincing cosplay as the *Top Gear* test track. It's no great distance from the original experience (for all its visual bluster, anti-grav is probably one of the more subtle gimmicks M[illegible] introduced in terms of how it plays), but you'll [illegible] at seeing it for the first time.

Then you have *Mario Kart 64*'s Royal Race[illegible] turned from a straightforward race into the [illegible] centrepiece of some great pageant, its sign[illegible] jump now a glide past dangerously low-flying [illegible] balloons. Or *DS*'s Cheep Cheep Beach, where [illegible] slow-you-down shallows are now steep dr[illegible] underwater areas, acting as both shortcuts [illegible] dangers. Some are certainly more cosmetic [illegible] *Mario Kart*'s Donut Plains 3 is now a shimm[illegible] puddle-strewn dirt track, but otherwise fa[illegible] *Double Dash!!*'s Dry Dry Desert is practically [illegible] but gets its own strangely ironic water haz[illegible]

Wii U packs some heft under its hood, making the top of these hoods shine in glorious light.

A self-righting cam prevents stomach-lurching sights. It'll still confuse, mind.

Traditional weapons such as ol' Inky here are joined by awesome innovations. We heart the Boomerang.

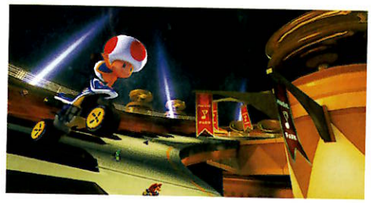
IT'S A DK JUNGLE IN THERE

As ever, some newer courses also make th[illegible] ravages of time (well, three years) have w[illegible] wrinkly wonders with *Mario Kart 7*'s DK [illegible] is now a more angular, broken affair, with [illegible] anti-grav sections and *Wii*'s Moo Moo M[illegible] shrunk, its wide-open roads are now tight [illegible] forcing you to vault over the ploughed [illegible] behind by the track's Monty Mole infest[illegible]

Our favourite of the upgrades, however [illegible] *Kart 64*'s Toad's Turnpike. The drab highw[illegible] now a neon-draped trip through the urban [illegible] Mushroom Kingdom that no one seems [illegible] its truck traffic now a mixture of cars [illegible] surfboards on roof racks, making for [illegible] jumps) and lorries, with the occasional [illegible] an anti-grav boost ramp that enables you [illegible] onto and grab the walls that bound the [illegible] for congestion now, Bozza. It's a perfe[illegible]

DK JUNGLE
[illegible] game's DK Jungle is too recent to be [illegible] 'retro' but it's bundled with the other [illegible] It hasn't changed a great deal, but [illegible] significant changes inside the temple [illegible] Upon entering you'll see a wall guiding you [illegible] as opposed to the barrier-free section [illegible] first-time racers into fatal drops – where [illegible] steepens into an anti-gravity section, [illegible] turning and falling back towards [illegible] The lighting's also been improved, [illegible] casting a glow on racers. The [illegible] in the centre of the temple spins [illegible] It's not the most radical change, but is [illegible] of Nintendo's attention to detail.

Rosalina looks pretty nifty in her racing gear. We do wonder where she keeps her faithful Luma, though.



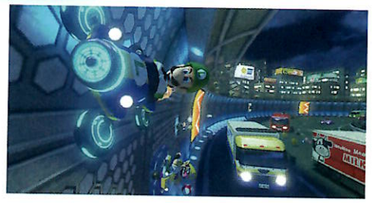
SUNSHINE AIRPORT
No prizes for guessing the Nintendo game that inspired this tropical setting. It's here that *Mario Kart 8* cements its place as the best-looking game on Wii U with a commitment to spectacle that outstrips the other circuits. A jumbo jet passes perilously close overhead as you glide down beneath it, in the terminal you'll skid across surfaces so polished you can see your reflection in them. You'll land on the curved wing of a plane as the track takes you through its cargo hold. It's positively stuffed with little visual gags and references, too. You'll see logos for three airlines: Galaxy Air, Propeller Toad Transport and BBIA (Boomerang Bros. International Airlines). Glance up at the departures board and you'll even see a destination of a new track, Dolphin Shoals. It's so much more *alive* than previous Mario Karts.

RAINBOW ROAD (MK64)
Yes, friends, Rainbow Road is back, but this isn't just any old slap-dash strip of kaleidoscopic tarmac, oh no. This is a refreshed and remastered version of the infamous stage (its sheer length ultimately saw it banned from office play) from *Mario Kart 64*. Though there's this gorgeous screen of it to rub your eyes all over you'd be forgiven for not recognising it because Nintendo's given it a drastic makeover. Gone is the completely black background that saw you racing around a yawning void. Rainbow Road *redux* swoops over a night-time city, full of houses with light streaming out their windows and big Christmas trees in between, as a massive flying train zooms by, glowing in the night sky. Fair to say that you don't see that every day. Er, unless your copy of *Polar Express* is jammed in the DVD player, that is.

DOLPHIN SHOALS
We've been given the briefest of glimpses of this aquatic idyll and, as the name suggests, it's a water-heavy track in which you'll be surfacing cetaceans and SCUBA divers emerging from the crystal-clear water, that runs *Sonic Lost World* close as the sun beats down onto a [illegible] into the shape of three dolphins.

[illegible] CIRCUIT (GBA)
[illegible] the most part, this is pretty familiar stuff: [illegible] and flat, albeit decorated with tyre walls [illegible] that weren't present in the original. [illegible] from its longest straight, however, and [illegible] suddenly see a chunk of it that has been [illegible] off the ground and placed onto a giant [illegible]. You'll jump up to this raised section, [illegible] around and back down towards the [illegible] turns that leads back to the start/finish [illegible] nothing particularly revolutionary, [illegible] but it's a welcome change to an [illegible] circuit. *Mario Kart 7* gave us fresh spins [illegible] courses, but until then we'd only seen [illegible] upgrades. This is thrillingly new.

This is the closest we'll ever get to a Wii U F-Zero. Face it, chums: Yoshi is the new Captain Falcon.



made the original track special, but throws in so much of what the new game offers that it feels entirely fresh. Of course, that's primarily in the anti-gravity feature.

While it might not change too much of the racing itself (although it does make for some fantastic mid-course battles, as competitors try to take advantage of the fact that crashing into one another now offers a pirouetting boost), it does offer some excellent course ideas.

After playing this game's Mario Circuit and its corkscrewing anti-grav sections for the first time, we had our reservations about how the game would balance the sheer spectacle of riding upside down with making it playable and it seems EAD saw the same problem. Most of the more spectacular stuff takes place either sideways or vertically.

THWOMP: THERE IT IS

The new Mario Kart Stadium features a brilliant climb into a firework-cracked night sky, while the mossy-bricked Thwomp Ruins features one open area that offers four separate routes through it, two of which take the road less travelled (because it's at right angles with gravity). That's certainly not all. While the addition of seven Koopalings to the considerable character roster might not shake the firmament too much, the two new items we've spotted so far certainly could.

The Boomerang is like a more skilful Fire Flower and handier Green Shell rolled into one. Throwing it can carve through any number of other racers in a straight line on the trip from and back to your hand, but you only get three bites at the Aboriginal apple before it's gone for good.

More interesting is the Piranha Plant Pot (grabbed from *Super Mario 3D World*'s Shadow Play Alley level), which sits on the front of your kart, happily chewing at any nearby racers, Question Blocks or (returning for their first console game since the SNES original) coins, with each new meal giving you a small boost. You can even tap L to have it chomp (and boost) vainly at the air, although we suspect this shortens its lifespan. It's an incredibly powerful, and therefore rare, new weapon, but it doesn't seem to be attached to your position in the same way as a Bullet Bill transformation, making it a race-changing upgrade to anyone who gets it.

SHELL BE BACK

EAD's desire to rework previous game's ideas comes to bear here, too, most notably in that most infamous weapon, the Blue Shell. Instead of flying over the rest of the pack on the way to its first-place victim, it now bounces along the track like the world's most terrifying skipped stone, meaning that being in the wrong place at the wrong time can get you hit, regardless of your

Keep an eye on all the billboards for loads of silly sight gags and goofy in-jokes.

ELECTRODROME
This as-yet untitled track begins with a party for Koopa Troopas, Shy Guys and Piranha Plants with a giant mirrorball and pulsing speakers either side of the track. You can skate across a tiled dancefloor, or race along a strange jet black wall, the surface of which reacts to your movements, lighting up to reveal a rainbow trail in each kart's wake. Then things get a little more interesting: the path forks into green and pink sections that wind around into what look like musical staves, before the green path twists upside-down. Keep following it and you'll see it run perpendicular to a drop-off point just after the starting grid, before the two tracks circle around and rejoin one another for a final flight down to the last bend. It's the perfect demonstration of how anti-grav allows for some dazzlingly complex track arrangements.

position. We assume it's been designed to help even up the whole race for the player in last, rather than just affecting the leader, but we weren't able to use it enough times to see if that would work out in the long run. In fact, giving control to racers who'd otherwise be out of it now seems to be of paramount concern: *Double Dash!!*'s approach to items, which had competitors visibly holding their pick-ups, returns, enabling you to avoid threats that might have been invisible previously. Holding onto groups of mushrooms for just the right corner could well be ineffective now, too: if someone gets close enough to your circling trio, they can nab one for themselves.

THINK BIKE

It's not all change. With the return of *Mario Kart Wii*'s bikes and *MK7*'s customisation, there is certainly more here for perfectionists to tinker with, but the feel is very much of an upgraded version of the 3DS game. The structure follows suit: in both single and multiplayer, you get a choice of 50, 100 or 150cc Grand Prix tournaments, Vs. Races, Time Trials and Battle. We haven't yet played the latter, but on current evidence we'd expect interesting new tracks, but probably not much of a change in style.

What with a gang of Koopalings on the track, Bowser is outnumbered.

> "CHANGES TEND TO BE IN WHAT YOU ARE SEEING AS YOU PLAY, RATHER THAN PLAY ITSELF"

ART FOR KART'S SAKE

That's more or less the philosophy of the game as a whole, as far as we've seen it. The changes tend to be in what we're seeing as you play, rather than the track. Having got the making of Mario Kart to a fine art the team seems to have turned more on creating what amounts to a fine art. We had our suspicions with previous builds, but they're now sure this is by far the best-looking game. Running at 60 frames per second and two-player, every drift sparks a blue skid left by a screeching kart.

WATER PARK
A submarine themed rollercoaster in a theme park apparently owned by Wario, this track takes you through a submarine museum, into a short aquatic section before a brief dip underwater in an animatronic sub. You'll accelerate out and make a loop, passing either side of another sub before descending into the depths, before a track around to another underwater section. There you'll scud past wind-up Cheep Cheeps and neon fronds of seaweed, with a nice shortcut between two sea shells. At the end of the course there's a flying section that sees you plummet past the big wheel and racing past the ticket office.

A sensitive glare from a nearby racer plays more than spilled engine oil. Whether that will be the online modes (online, two-player and tournaments) we don't know, but the idea has us [illegible] out.

Dropping to a standard 30fps for games with two of you, the sheer technicolour screen is more than enough to get you by. A new track set above and below the aquatic carnival, bustles and gleams with Haunted Mansion's Boo house theatrics [illegible] twisting and shifting the race track [illegible] shapes and even the most basic new [illegible] dazzles with its selection of sight gags hidden in the trackside detail.

DIVE IN

[illegible] makes up for its shortcomings [illegible] style that's enough to send our [illegible] spasms of jealous hunger. It's in [illegible] from a commentary box full of [illegible] the way Mario's moustache waves [illegible] things you'd only see in, say, [illegible] after the end of each race [illegible] the most colossal display of [illegible] we've seen for some time, EAD [illegible] handily to view key moments [illegible] close up. We've seen Mario sidle [illegible] chucking a Red Shell into his [illegible] seen Donkey Kong's fur rustle [illegible] at a rampaging Wario. After [illegible] when we take a shell up the [illegible] the virtual stars do to.

[illegible] that we couldn't possibly [illegible] we won't need to remember [illegible] as we learned at last year's E3,

We really like Mario's serious face that he's whipping out for *Mario Kart 8*. Don't mess.

Mario and chums really do find the very worst places to race. Mark our words: it'll end in tears.

All seven Koopalings are playable for the first time. We like the one with the natty Elton John glasses.

SWEET SWEET CANYON
At the starting grid you'll witness gingerbread spectators waving you off, before you take a gentle turn to the right, past what look like stacks of triple-filled Oreos and enter a tunnel. Doubling back on yourself, you'll soon end up in a fizzy lemonade/syrup/boiling caramel lake for an underwater section. Once you break the surface you'll find yourself racing up a long strip of brightly coloured candy like a stretchy Wham bar, dodging chocolate puddles speckled with hundreds and thousands so you don't slow down. A sequence of turns twists you this way and that past wafer windmills and ice cream trees, before a short drop brings you back to the start line for another lap. All it's missing is a Wispa Gold in the background and you've got our editor Matthew's dream track/diet.

you'll be able to share highlights over Miiverse with the new Mario Kart TV feature, which provides beautiful highlight reels after every race.

We know, we know, the replay sections in previous Mario Kart games have been throwaway, forgettable efforts. This time it's different. You don't have to sit through a replay of the entire race, for starters: now you can customise your own highlight reel by choosing from a list of settings. You could, for example, specify a 30-second highlight reel that focused exclusively on Metal Mario and the best drifts he pulled off. Alternatively, if there was a big ding-dong battle between Peach and Wario throughout an entire race you can make the highlight reel focus on both of them, make it last longer and only show the best weapon attacks.

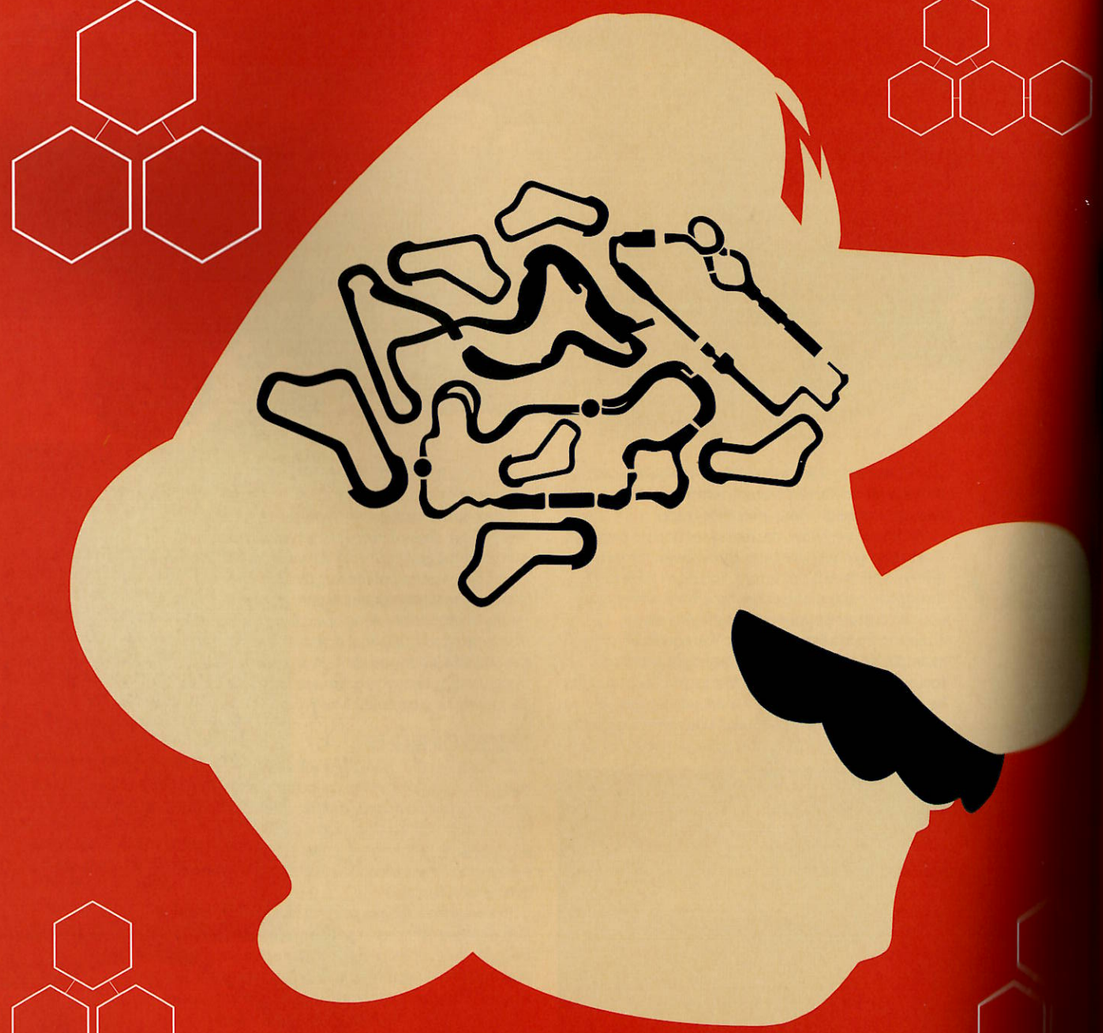
Once you are happy with your bespoke highlight reel you can share it in order that your friends might marvel at the epic race in which you just participated. That's only one half of the fun, though: the other is in slowing the replays down. Again, we realise that this is hardly as groundbreaking or exciting as inventing a new type of umbrella that doesn't have pointy bits at the end, but when you can take it down to Matrix-style bullet-time speeds you get to see those classic Mario Kart tussles in a completely new light.

PIECES OF EIGHT

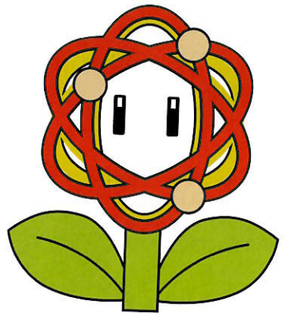
You finally get the chance to look at all the details you wouldn't normally get the chance to study when you're bombing it down a road, lobbing fireballs everywhere. You'll watch his eyes as he trains them on his enemy, wonder at the lighting effects as his fireballs bathe everything around them in a red glow and, yes, you'll see his face-fuzz flap.

In a way, that's all you need to know about *Mario Kart 8*. While other racing titles pride themselves on their soulless subjects, this is a game that you'll want to play and then watch what you did all over again, just to see anything you might have missed: distant clashes between friends, fist-bitingly near misses and character interaction you didn't have time to appreciate. *Mario Kart 8* was built to be looked at as well as played, and we guarantee you'll be doing a lot of both in the very near future. +

The Science of Mario Kart



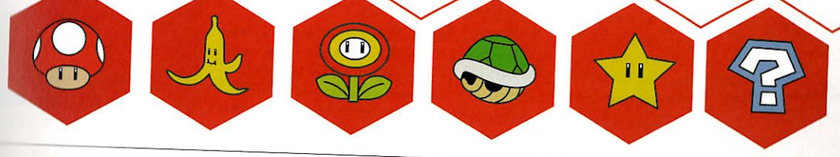
Anything is possible in the Virtual world but how would Mario kart handle in the real world? **Find out with the appliance of science...**



Cars held aloft by wings? That grinding sound is likely Newton spinning in his grave.

ACTS – WE LOVE 'EM. AND LET'S face it, they're more interesting than Christmas cracker jokes. That's an opinion shared by The Royal Institution of Great Britain, an independent charity and research body that tries to educate the world about how brilliant and interesting science is. They're best-known for their Christmas lectures, a tradition that started in 1825 and which has been running to this day, where a group of clever people with enormous brains turn the big ideas of the scientific world into a jamboree of educational – and very Christmassy – entertainment.

Having run out own lectures in the past – we once quizzed a noted astronomer about the science of Super Mario Galaxy – we thought we'd repeat the trick with another big Nintendo series. And series come none bigger, nor more science-baffling, than Mario Kart. This year it's the turn of Mario Kart to come under our microscope, and of automotive expert Thomas Ashton to embiggen our brains. Thomas is a design director at top car company CGI Consulting, and has 19 years' experience in his field. He's an ambassador for British Automotive Design Excellence, travelling across the globe and basically telling everyone how great British cars are. So who better to answer a bunch of silly questions about the science of Mario Kart? Turn the page to discover whether a banana really can send a kart spinning off a track, or whether flying cars could actually appear on – or above – our roads...



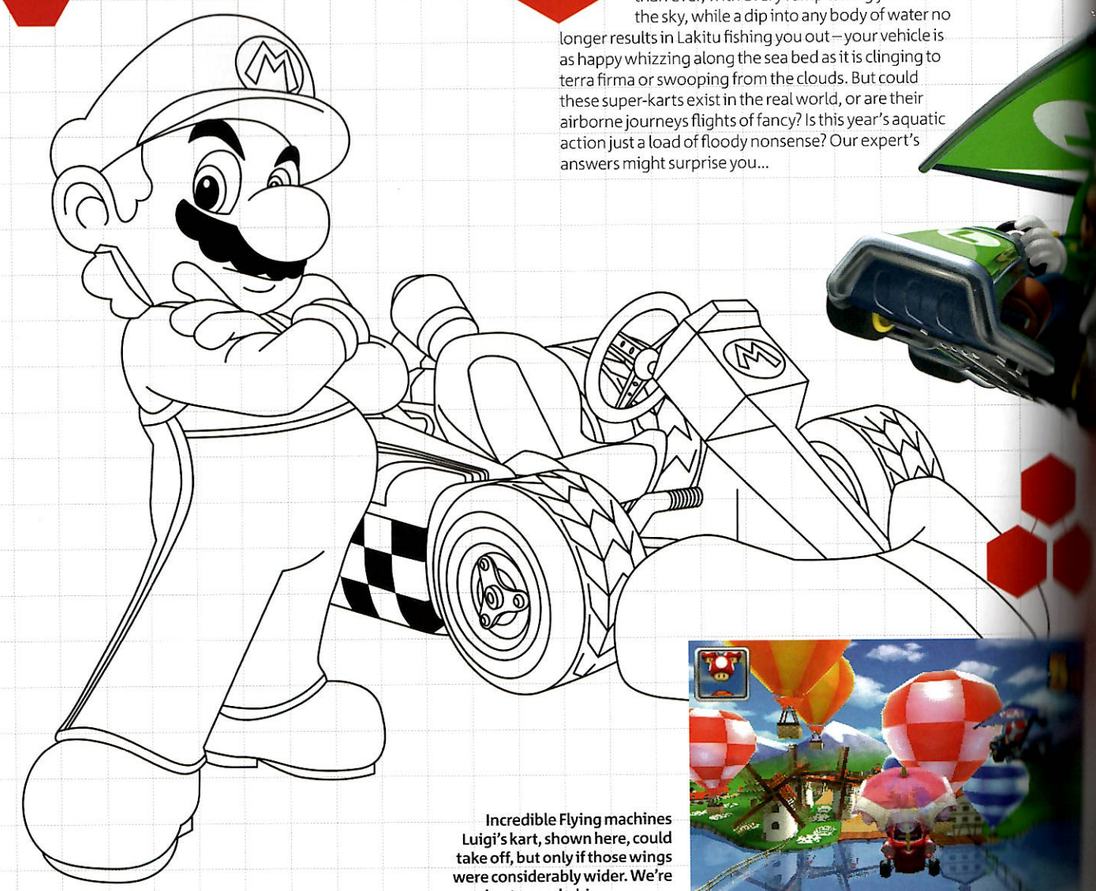
Chapter one
In The Garage

Discover whether your kart's modifications are down to earth or pie in the sky...

Big wheels: you'll go faster, but reaching that top speed will take a lot longer.

1 NTRODUCTION

With *Mario Kart 8* letting you pimp your ride in more ways than ever, it's wise to spend a little more time tinkering before you hit the track. This year's karts are more versatile than ever, with every ramp taking you into the sky, while a dip into any body of water no longer results in Lakitu fishing you out – your vehicle is as happy whizzing along the sea bed as it is clinging to terra firma or swooping from the clouds. But could these super-karts exist in the real world, or are their airborne journeys flights of fancy? Is this year's aquatic action just a load of floody nonsense? Our expert's answers might surprise you...



Incredible Flying machines Luigi's kart, shown here, could take off, but only if those wings were considerably wider. We're going to need a bigger page...

FLYING KARTS

Mario's always been a bit of a flighty sort, what with capes and P-wings and even Tanooki suits (to a point), so it's perhaps a surprise it took so long for *Mario Kart 7* to get him properly airborne. *MK7*'s winged wonders were a feat of digital engineering, but surely kart-based flight couldn't be possible in the real world. Or could it?

Thomas says: "It's down to the size and weight of the kart. There have been flying karts before, believe it or not, and after the war, especially in the States, a few designers and engineers actually came up with kart concepts that do fly, and physically they worked. In one of the James Bond films, one of the villains had this flying vehicle which was based on a real car around the '50s and '60s in the US."

WINGS

Okay, so flying is a very real possibility for a go-kart – even with Donkey Kong behind the wheel. But MK designer Hideki Konno and team reckon a pair of fairly flimsy glider wings that pop out from the kart could keep it airborne. Unlikely, yes?

Thomas says: "Physically it's possible, but I'd question whether they could just pop out of the kart. If you were towing a trailer and the trailer had the wings, then maybe so. Within the kart? I'd say no. At a guesstimate, if we take a small kart with a character in, it's going to be perhaps 100 kilos, possibly going up to 200 for the heavier ones. To get that amount of lift you're going to need a huge surface area. I'm not an engineer, but I'd suggest 8-10 square metres in total, or 4-5 per wing."

TAKE-OFF

Flying might be a possibility, assuming we have big enough wings on our kart, but even with a wingspan to shame an albatross, we're not entirely convinced that a piffling 50cc kart could generate enough oomph to soar, even with an additional kick off a boost ramp. Could the slower vehicles make it into the sky?

Thomas says: "Lift-off is about speed. You have no drive in the air because the drive is in the wheels. The glider works through speed, it doesn't have any physical thrust. For a small kart you'd probably need to do between 20 and 30 miles per hour, which should be enough momentum to get high and low pressure over the wings to create enough lift to get it airborne – again, assuming the wings are large enough."

UNDERWATER RACING

Everyone knows that cars are happiest on dry land, with all that delicious tarmac to roll over. But perhaps science has a different answer...

Thomas says: "Well, a petrol engine needs fuel and air, and they're mixed together for the internal combustion the engine requires to run. Without air, a petrol engine wouldn't work, so off-road vehicles that can go through deep water have a 'snorkel' that comes up from the engine and above the waterline, so the engine can still get the oxygen to allow that internal combustion. Having said that, diesel engines are probably more suitable for underwater racing. You'll still need a snorkel, but with a petrol engine you'd need a spark, and because you're submerging an electrical system you've got problems with generating that spark, whereas the diesel engine doesn't actually need electronics – the fuel is pressurised within the engine and it self-ignites."

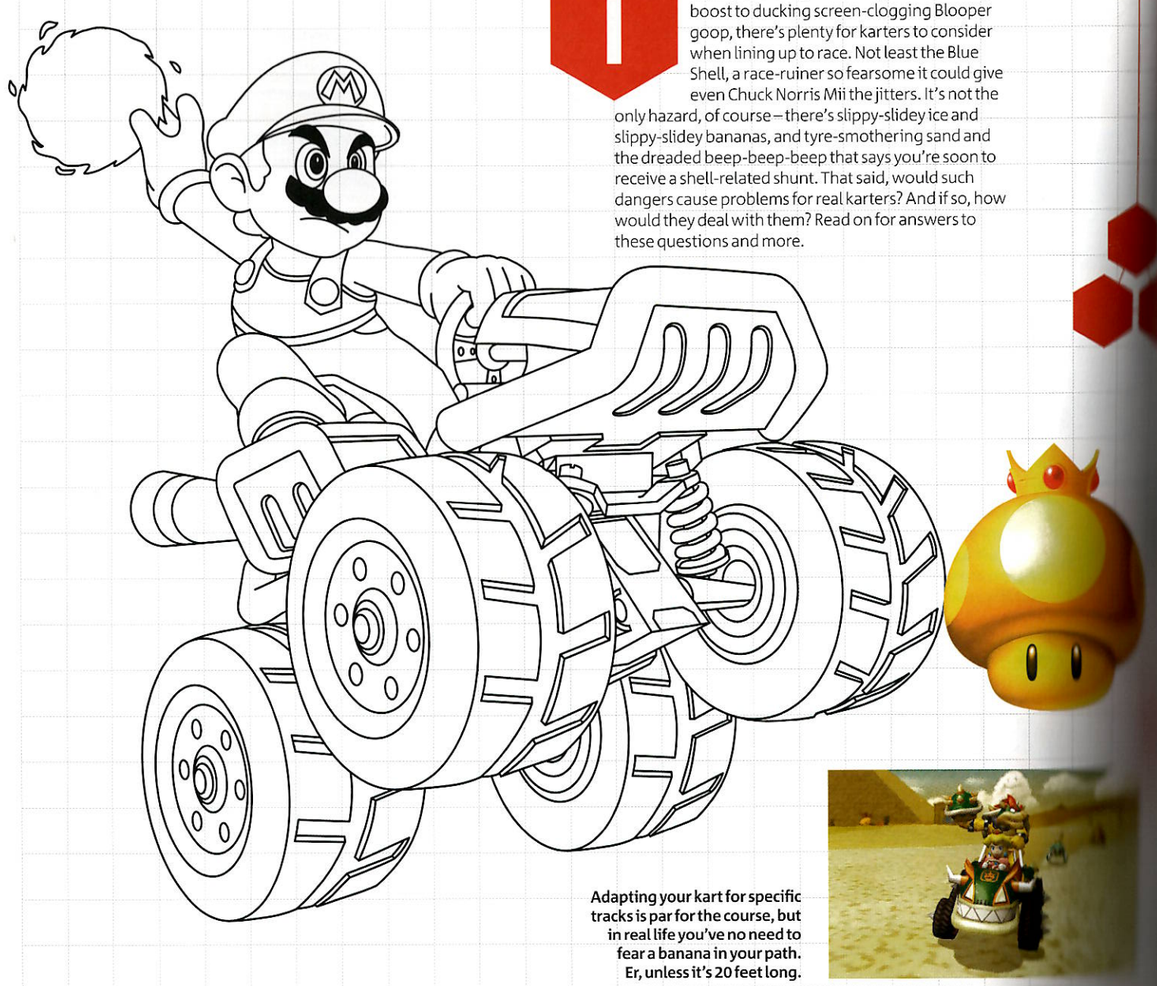
MODIFICATIONS

One thing that impresses about *MK8* is how it offers unparalleled kart customisation, allowing you to fasten enormo-tyres onto tiny karts to create essentially the cutest monster trucks ever. But would larger wheels help in a race, or hinder your chances of crossing the finish line in first place?

Thomas says: "The simple answer is: the larger the wheel, the slower your acceleration. That's because the wheels act as gearing. If you imagine driving a normal car, when you're driving in first gear you can perhaps reach 20mph. Acceleratively it's very good, but the top speed is very poor – and that's the equivalent of having very small wheels. Larger wheels would make for a higher top speed but slow acceleration: the equivalent to fifth gear in a family car. If you could somehow put the larger wheels on once you have the momentum, you'd have an advantage, as you'd get a higher top speed, but with huge wheels you'll struggle to get off the line."

Chapter Two
On The Tracks

Could your power-ups and driving techniques give you a real-world advantage?



Adapting your kart for specific tracks is par for the course, but in real life you've no need to fear a banana in your path. Er, unless it's 20 feet long.

INTRODUCTION

From perfecting the timing of the starting boost to ducking screen-clogging Blooper goop, there's plenty for karters to consider when lining up to race. Not least the Blue Shell, a race-ruiner so fearsome it could give even Chuck Norris Mii the jitters. It's not the only hazard, of course – there's slippy-slidey ice and slippy-slidey bananas, and tyre-smothering sand and the dreaded beep-beep-beep that says you're soon to receive a shell-related shunt. That said, would such dangers cause problems for real karters? And if so, how would they deal with them? Read on for answers to these questions and more.

Big wheels: you'll go faster, but reaching that top speed will take a lot longer.

BANANAS

Yellow, bendy and rich in potassium, everyone's favourite yellow fruit that isn't a lemon is the sneakiest of Mario weapons, its impassive smile mocking you as you spin on the spot, vowing revenge on the karter who discarded it. But could a banana skin really cause a kart to come off the road?

Thomas says: "Assuming the characters and karts are of slightly smaller than normal size, and if it's a big banana, sure, it might have an impact. Anything smaller than that, or with a larger kart, it's not likely to have any dangerous consequences. A banana is a slippery fruit, so I think if there's enough material on the road it would have an effect on the kart. The effect would obviously vary depending on the size and weight of the kart and the size of the banana skin."

BUNNY-HOPPING

Tap a button and your kart will briefly bounce up from the track, making drifting around corners that bit easier. But would the ability to do this assist with cornering in the real world?

Thomas says: "I'd say no. If you imagine yourself in a car going around a fast corner, the last thing you want to do is bounce, as it lifts the weight of the vehicle into the air, which obviously means you'll lose grip. Efficient cornering is all about the friction of the tyres against the road – the minute you reduce that friction by bouncing, you reduce that contact, and you're going to spin off. It would actually be a hindrance."

MUSHROOMS

The eating man's nitrous oxide, these fungi give karters a urst of speed. But could this temporary turbo be recreated? And if so, how?

Thomas says: "Fuel and diesel have a calorific energy value, and if you can increase that then you'd get better performance. For example, you can get 95 octane petrol at the pumps, but you can also get super-unleaded which is around 98 octane, and has a higher energy output, making it a more potent fuel. With nitrous, you're injecting a gas into the fuel system that burns quicker and more effectively, therefore giving you better performance. So I guess that's the equivalent of the mushrooms."

TRACKS

Mario Kart has had us racing on a variety of surfaces – from tarmac to mud, ice, wood and even a pinball table. Would a real-world kart need significant modifications to run on these tracks?

Thomas says: "Tyres are the main consideration. On tarmac you'd have a standard rubber race tyre. If you were driving on ice, you'd need something like they have on rally cars – studded tyres which are similar to road tyres but have pins protruding through the surface which dig down into the ice to provide the grip. If you were racing in a pinball machine, your main concern would be the bumpers and flippers bashing you from the side and the front, so you'd need to reinforce your kart to protect it."

SAND

Anyone who's played Dry Dry Desert knows one important sand fact: it can easily reduce speed to zero. How to cope with such a tricky surface?

Thomas says: "What you need to do when racing on sand is to let air pressure out of your tyres. That lets the tyre balloon, and the ballooning affects the contact point between tyre and surface – it provides a larger surface area. A flatter tyre has a wider contact patch with the sand than a fully inflated tyre; the larger contact patch the better the grip. The thing about sand is that it's about maintaining momentum – if you're going a certain speed then you're okay, but the minute you slow down you're going to sink. You want enough speed that you're literally floating over the surface."

SHELLS

Could you build a firing mechanism into a kart without affecting how well it handles?

Thomas says: "A tank can fire a shell, so there's no reason why a kart can't. Whether a single occupant could aim while driving would be a question. If you had a mechanism that could fire forwards while you drove, I would say yes, it's possible. You would need to consider how many shells to carry, because the weight could hinder your performance. You could have higher speed but no armaments, or be a little bit slower but have the potential to knock a few of your opponents out. It's all about getting that balance right, isn't it?"

CONTENTS

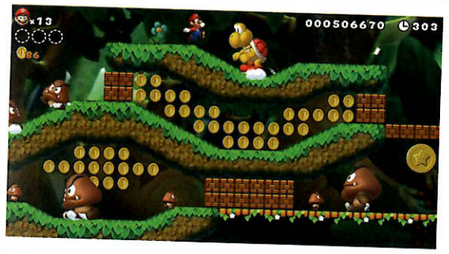
New Super Mario Bros.

122 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. **126** NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii
128 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2 **134** NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U

134

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U

Mario's first steps in HD were made in this fine, if conventional, slice of 2D run-and-jump. That said, a new challenge mode does reveal NSMB's hidden depths, making this a must-have for Mario's hardcore fans.



FORMAT DS OUT MAY 2006 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

New Super Mario Bros.

Nintendo go back to basics for some old school magic

WHAT IS IT

After years of 3D delights Nintendo surprised everyone with a return to the simplicity of the very first *Super Mario Bros.* granished with touches from its many follow-ups.

In the years between 1991 and 2006 we prayed to the gods for another episode of pure 2D heaven to match the unparalleled joy that was *Super Mario World*. Finally, the game we'd been waiting for arrived. This was proper Mario. There was no cheating hover jumps like in Yoshi's or Peach's games. You landed on small platforms using bad-ass skills. There are no hearts or petal-leaf health bars.

Touching an enemy made you shrink, and then it killed you. Enemies didn't stay alive when you stood on their head. And you couldn't lift them up or hit them with an umbrella, either. You stamped on them and they copped it. No messing about.

Old-time Mario fans are were by nostalgic joy as they kicked Koopa shells through rows of enemies, went down pipes to underground vaults and heard that distinctive 'growing' sound whenever Mario helped himself to a mushroom-based meal.

But *New Super Mario Bros.* was as fresh as it was nostalgic, packed with loads of new elements and concepts that moved the series forward as well as taking full advantage of the superior power processing of the Nintendo DS. You met enemies you'd never seen and used powers you've never used.

We imagine many of you bought a DS specifically to play *NSMB*. We did!

BRICKING IT

Mario's newer, more acrobatic abilities enhanced the traditional 2D gameplay. His ground pound returned, enabling him to smash bricks beneath him, along with the familiar triple jump which has Mario performing three consecutive jumps for extra height.

Best of all was the inclusion of the wall jump, where Mario kicked back off vertical surfaces to gain extra height, or bounce between two walls like some kind of portly, Italian ninja. We also saw the plumber tip-toe

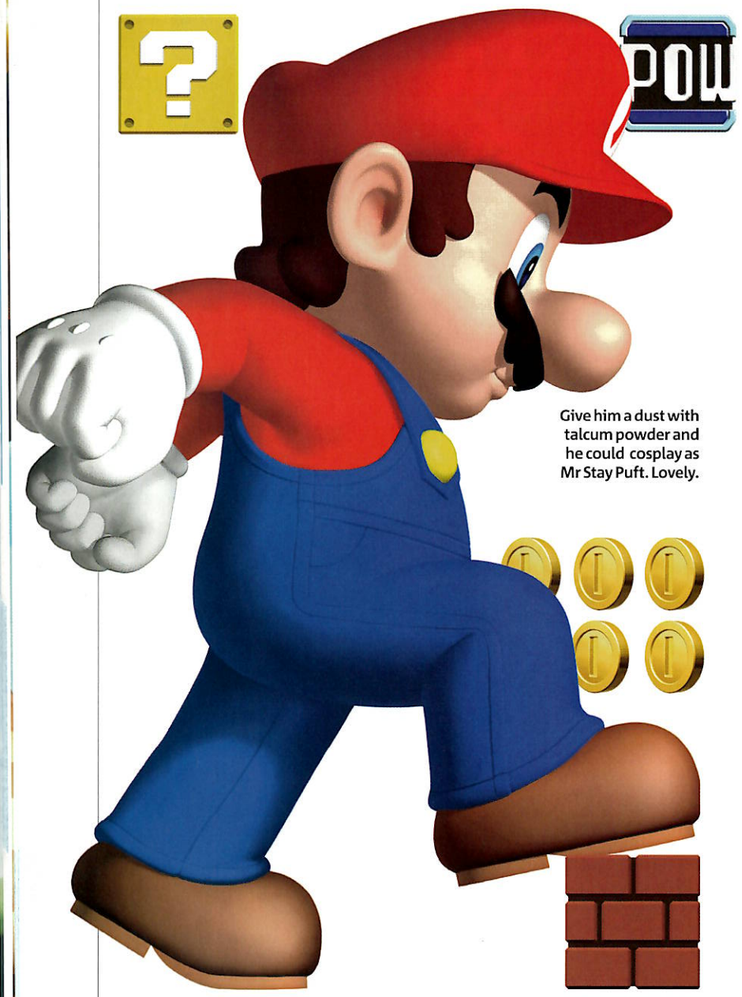
If they're up high you bonk 'em from below. If you don't know this by now, we can't help.

PLAY IT NOW

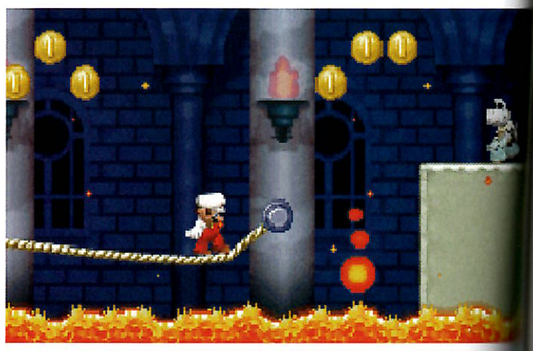
New Super Mario Bros. is available on DS, but will happily play on a Nintendo 3DS or 2DS. That said, it's been out for a good eight years, so you might have to have a proper hunt to sniff out a copy. Best of luck!

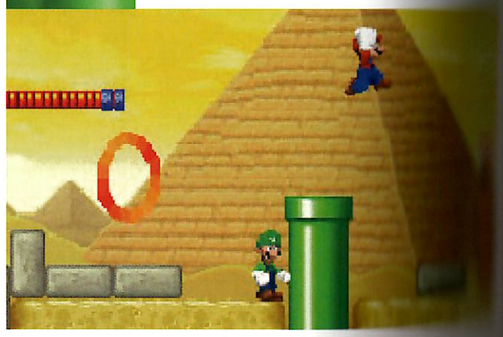
"FINALLY, THE GAME WE'D BEEN WAITING FOR HAD ARRIVED: THIS WAS PROPER MARIO"

It's Mario meets Godzilla as a Mega Mushroom sees every pipe and Goomba crushed under foot. Truly tragic stuff.



Give him a dust with talcum powder and he could cosplay as Mr Stay Puft. Lovely.





precariously over tightropes *Mario Sunshine*-sty the ropes bending convincingly under his weig bounced off spinning springs that sent him twi through the air with his arms out like a helicopt seen in *Super Mario 64*; the blue climbable fen returned, complete with the rotating sections Mario bashes to flip the other way; he can swi ropes with physics that are far superior to olde forcing players to time their jump perfectly to right amount of momentum to the next platf

SHELL OF A WEAPON

Despite *Super Mario World* feeling as perfect could be, Nintendo managed to incorporate moves – as well as giving Mario a believably feel – without spoiling the essence of that game. Mario moves with such flawless flui mastering all his amazing feats will have you through levels smiling, smug with satisfac

He was graced with some handy new po Discovering Shell Mario was a moment of the dash button to run and Mario tucks in his limbs and shoots along the floor like a kick battering through goons in his way. Altho kicked carapace could bounce dangerous the environment and shoot into the near a great ability once it's mastered.

No such worries for Mega Mario, though a giant 'shroom grows him to the height For 10 or so seconds, Mario can stomp

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

MEGA MARIO
Mega destruction Mega Mario the bigger the rewards. Fill at the top of the screen to and you'll earn five 1-Ups.

EEL AT EASE
Mario's underwater trip is rudely interrupted by this massive eel-like thing. When an enemy hogs over half the screen it's time to flee.

DRY BOWSER
Possibly the most disturbing Mario moment ever: the first world's lava sears Bowser's skin clean off. The result? A bitter skeli-koopa.

Luigi and Yoshi have escaped from their own pages. Er, sorry about that!

through pipes, bricks, platforms and any enemies that get in his way. A Mega Meter measures any damage caused, awarding extra lives for more potent rampages. Not cool Mario, not cool.

Mini Mario is Mega Mario's opposite. At full speed he can skim over the surface of water, meaning he can leap from a body of water to new platforms high above. Even better, many levels feature tiny secret paths and miniature pipes that only Mini Mario can fit into, giving you entirely new routes through stages.

Every world has secret levels that offer alternative routes to the final castle. Some secret stages are accessed by finding alternative exits, but other stages can only be accessed by paying a certain number of special Star Coins to unlock gates on the map screen. There are three Star Coins in every level, often hidden in hard-to-find places that'll take you ages to find.

HOLY MOLE-Y

Even after you've conquered the main quest there's still plenty to come back to. The mini-game mode is back, with all of the games seen in *Super Mario 64 DS* along with a few new ones. One new game set in Bowser's fiery castle has you moving a Bob-omb around the screen to avoid Bowser's flame breath and the hundreds of fireballs that come your way.

Another is whack-a-mole gone mad, with holes covering the entire screen and moles popping up faster than you can hit them – smash more than 73 and you're a greater mole-murderer than us.

There's also a multiplayer mode that has players racing through two-dimensional levels in order to collect the most Stars within a time limit. This is especially fun as Mario's super powers, including Mega Mario, have been thrown in to spice up the action. Things get pretty nasty as players scramble to grab Stars, Fire Flowers and giant Mushrooms that will enable them to kick everyone else's arse.

And don't worry if you only have one cart because, although the selection of levels is considerably smaller, Download Play still gives six great levels to play.

Put it all together on one slimline DS cartridge and you have a classic Mario game, one that still holds up despite Nintendo mining the 'New' label ever since. It's endlessly addictive with as much of that one-more-go appeal as Mario's old-time classics.

> "JUST ONE MORE GO: THE MARIO EFFECT WILL NEVER GET OLD"

Whenever you die you will be frustrated, it will make you grit your teeth in anger and shout the baddest words that you know. But you'll immediately slam the A button to re-enter the level for another go because you are simply not prepared to let that infuriatingly tricky chasm, cunningly placed Koopa or pesky spike-throwing Lakitu beat you. That's the Mario effect and it will absolutely never get old. +

FORMAT Wii OUT NOVEMBER 2009 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

New Super Mario Bros. Wii

Are four butts better than one?

WHAT IS IT

Although *Mario 64* DS and *New Super Mario Bros.* featured multiplayer modes, this marked the first time it was properly integrated into the main game.

New Super Mario Bros DS was a successful return to the series' core principles, but after its release, Shigeru Miyamoto expressed regret that its difficulty level had been pitched a little too low to sufficiently challenge expert players. He wanted the next Mario Bros. game to hold equal appeal across all skill levels, from 20-year veterans to novice grannies. The result was *New Super Mario Bros Wii*, which is either the hardest or the easiest Mario game you'll ever play, depending on how you choose to approach it.

In order to achieve this, Miyamoto also had to realise another of his long-time visions. He and his team had flirted with the idea of a simultaneous multiplayer Mario almost from the very beginning, but the closest they'd come to achieving this up to now was *Mario 64*. (At one point in the *64*'s development cycle, they had a working co-operative mode up and running, but technical limitations meant that it was back to the subs bench for poor old Luigi come release day.) The family-friendly Wii console finally presented Miyamoto with an opportunity to fulfil what he called his 'dream' with *New Super Mario Bros Wii*, which allowed four plumbers (or Toads) to bounce around on-screen at the same time. This multiplayer functionality would prove key to cementing *NSMB Wii*'s universal appeal.

Stick the game into that glowing slot for a dose of chaotic multiplayer fun.

It's a shame that Yoshi gets a short outing, but we won't look a gift dino in the mouth.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Choose to tackle *New Super Mario Bros Wii* on your lonesome and you'll find it a formidable foe. *NSMB DS* may have been designed to ease the Touch Generation into the swing of things, but *NSMB Wii* saw the (white) gloves come off, with some evil examples of level design that wouldn't look out of place in *Mario World*'s Special Zone. The eighth and final regular world in particular is a constant production line of death, packed to capacity with bone-crushing pistons and scorching lava pits. Level 8-7 sees *NSMB Wii* at its most spiteful; a maniacal on-rails train ride sees your sled steed dip in and out of a sea of magma at a rate of around twice per second. Although defeating Bowser isn't too tall a task, attempting to collect all of the Star Coins is a real tongue-to-elbow job. Your reward for doing so? A ninth Star World, containing eight even more treacherous designs. Oh, man!

Sync up a spare remote or three, however, and *NSMB Wii* becomes quite a different beast. A tamer beast, we might say. While the layouts remain the same, with plural plumbers scampering around, the game transforms from a taxing trial-by-Thwomp fail-fest into what's almost a light-hearted party game. The key difference is that death no longer necessarily means death. As long as one player remains alive, play continues – with deceased participants reborn at the edge of the screen within the confines of a bubble (which pops upon contact with another player) leading to some hilariously mischievous games of cat-and-mouse).

WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?

Multiplayer is nominally co-operative, with players sharing a common goal and a communal coin count. Circumstance soon turns friends into fiends, as players compete for power-ups and bounce off one another's heads mid-flight to reach higher platforms, usually condemning the bouncee to the cold embrace of a bottomless pit. The level design is typically to blame for every instance where it encourages collusion (such as a tantalisingly out-of-reach Star Coin), there's another where it's a case of survival of the fittest – plumbers into one tiny hidey-hole just doesn't work.

At its core, Mario has always been about how you interact with the physicality of the world around you, and by adding yet more Mazzas to the mix, *NSMB Wii*'s multiplayer takes the formula to its logical conclusion. When you have your friends bouncing around the screen alongside you, it's so much more barmy that it's impossible to take it seriously. Where your party guests have gone? Fire up the Wii and wipe that smile clean off your face.

Why would a Yoshi follow the orders of a piddling Toad? We'd gobble him whole.

PLAY IT NOW

New Super Mario Bros. Wii is currently available on Wii, of course, but it will also play perfectly happily on your Wii U. You will definitely want to dig up four Remotes if you want to get the very most from it, mind you.

Five seconds later one of those Toads was dead and Mum gave Dad a dead arm.

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

SUPERSIZE-A ME
Nintendo was careful to make the most of all that power. If you think these spiky pillars are big, wait 'til you see the size of the Bullet Bills.

TOAD DOWN A HOLE
Girly screams emanate from completed levels on the World Map. These indicates Toads hidden within who need guiding to the exit.

FORMAT NINTENDO 3DS OUT AUGUST 2012 DEVELOPER NINTENDO EAD PUBLISHER NINTENDO

New Super Mario Bros. 2

Mario goes for gold in his 2D-but-3D debut

WHAT IS IT

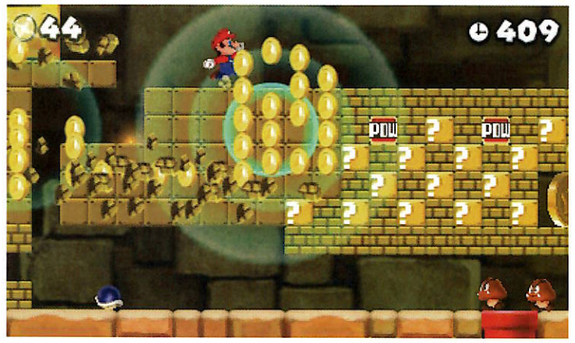
After dazzling with *Super Mario 3D Land* Mario returns (again) to his conventional roots with a 2D trip down memory lane.

There once was a boy who had done so well at school and gained such high grades throughout the year that by the time his final exams came around he was more or less guaranteed a pass mark no matter what he did. Because the pressure was off he started to put in less effort, eased up on the studying and submitted an exam paper that – while it did the job – wasn't up to his usual high standards. While he was happy that he'd got his pass mark, his teachers were pretty disappointed that he'd worked so hard only to go and get all sloppy at the end. We think you know what we're getting at here...

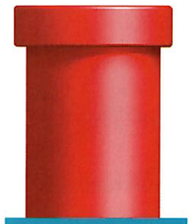
New Super Mario Bros. 2 was a guaranteed success for Nintendo, of that there is no question. The DS original sold more than 28 million copies worldwide and the Wii follow-up shifted another 25 million – if you thought the third instalment of the game was going to be a sales flop then we've got a whole bunch of MySpace shares you might be interested in buying. Before we continue though, here's a disclaimer: this is far from a perfect Mario game. In spite of this shocking revelation, you may be surprised that the game comes with a glowing recommendation.

That's because the main positive – the gameplay – remains so well-tuned, responsive and intuitive that even though it disappoints in other aspects it's still an essential title. We just don't feel it's as accomplished as previous games in the series. It's worth bearing in mind that a lesser Mario game is still an incredible platformer in the grand scheme of things. The physics, the level design, the enemy animation and just the overall feel of the game are always incredible and it's no different here – everything you loved about the previous *New Super Mario Bros.* gameplay is present and accounted for here, and you're guaranteed fantastic platforming action, hence the big thumbs

Did you find *3D Land* a little *too* 3D for your tastes? Try this instead.



For the game's various faults, there's nothing like watching a screen explode into gold.



PLAY IT NOW

New Super Mario Bros. 2 is available on 3DS and can be purchased through the eShop as a digital download. The game can also be purchased from Nintendo's own store, found at **store.nintendo.co.uk.**

During a time of recession, these gold antics are in rather poor taste.

we'd happily give the game. But it's the differe[illegible] between one thumb and two, between a great [illegible] and a sensational one. Here *NSMB2* falls short.

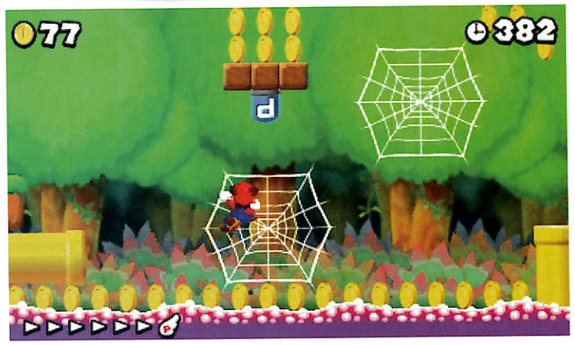
PLOT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT?

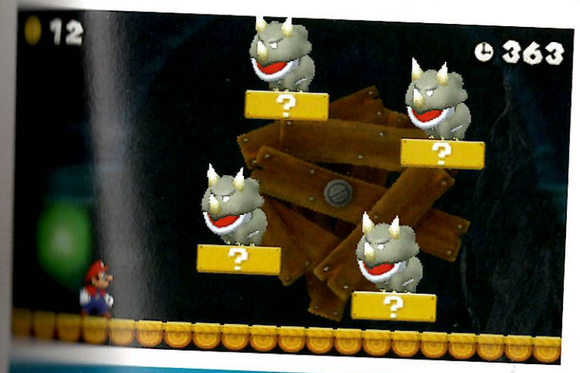
The story's a real shocker. Brace yourselves, be[illegible] this time Peach hasn't been kidnapped by Bow[illegible] Well, okay, she's been kidnapped by the Koop[illegible] who take her back to Bowser anyway, but we th[illegible] we'd try to surprise you there. Trust us, surp[illegible] few and far between otherwise.

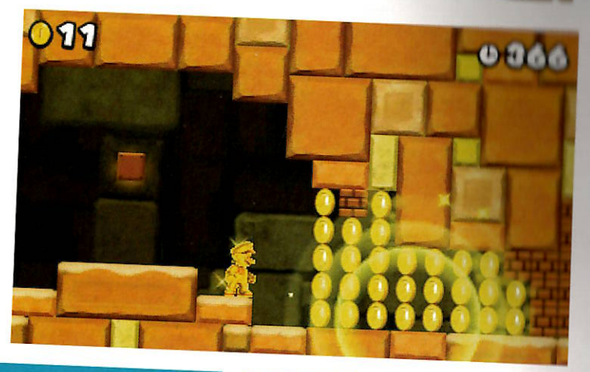
The big emphasis this time around is on co[illegible] pop out all over the shop – but no matter how [illegible] to us, the reality is that in the main adventure [illegible] is serve to make the game easier. There's a co[illegible] that pushes you to get a grand total of a mill[illegible] (something that will take many tens of hours [illegible] numerous repeat playthroughs before you [illegible] come close to it), but as you actually play th[illegible] game the only difference you'll notice is the [illegible] extra lives you'll get.

A half-decent player will be swimming in [illegible] mid-way point (we had 112 lives by the end of [illegible] and while decent players will concede they [illegible] seen a Game Over screen in a side-scrolling [illegible] game for some years now, it does seem like [illegible] little too far this time.

It isn't a Mario game without power-up[illegible] *Super Mario Bros. 2* is something of a mi[illegible] respect. The golden mushroom (which [illegible]







MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

A GOLD FACE

[illegible] gold a big, gold face and big, [illegible] spray from his big, gold [illegible] he's one of a few people [illegible] to sneeze on our face.

A TOUCH OF GOLD

Hit a gold ring and every enemy will turn gold, spouting a trail of coins as they wander along. Kick a gold shell for the mother of all paydays. Yay!

SOME MORE COINS

Listen, *New Super Mario Bros. 2* only really has one trick and that trick is gold, and lots of it. If you don't like the sight of coins, just forget it.

One smack from a gold fireball will turn any block to gold, King Midas-style.

"THE STORY IS A REAL SHOCKER: THE PRINCESS HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED"

golden fireballs that turn everything into coins) is satisfying to use because the power it gives you is patently ridiculous, while there's something oddly addictive about putting a coin block on your head and running along as a stream of coins pours out. Yes, you might be making the game easier, but so what?

Finally, the return of the Raccoon Suit power-up is a welcome one for fans of *Super Mario Bros. 2*, but you don't actually get that many opportunities to fly with it – rather it's mainly used for floating slowly to the ground. In this way it acts much like the Tanooki Suit in *Super Mario 3D Land*, making jumps easier and allowing you to attack nearby enemies with your Tail Whip move.

MUSHROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

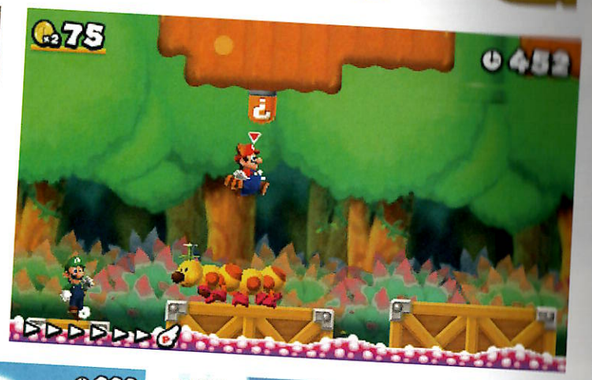
Other than that, there's nothing else. The Mega Mushroom appears one single time in the main adventure, and the Mini-Mushroom doesn't see much more action than that. All that's left are the standard Mushroom, Fire Flower and Starman which work as they always have done. It's all just so familiar.

So too is the music, which is oddly limited. We hope you're a fan of the main *New Super Mario Bros.* theme (the one that goes "waah waah") because the vast majority of the soundtrack this time consists of a handful of variations on it. In fact, there isn't really much new music at all – only the ending theme comes to mind as a new track and even then it's still based on existing music. Even the map screens have music from *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*.

Visually it's an odd one, too. When playing in 2D the backgrounds are lush, detailed affairs that almost look like they have a very slight coloured pencil effect filter over them at times. As you slide up the 3D slider though these backgrounds are deliberately blurred out of focus until – with the slider all the way to the top – they're just a blur of colours, with only Mario and the foreground platforms visible.

As a stylistic choice it's an interesting one but we just don't get it – it's almost as if they wanted us to play it in 2D. Surely the switch to 3D would do enough to separate Mario from the background without having to lose any detail? As it is then, the best way to play the game is with the slider only half-way up. That way you can enjoy the 3D effect but still get at least some detail.

As with its console predecessor you can also play *New Super Mario Bros. 2* in co-op mode (though only with two players instead of up to four). One player controls the Mario, the other plays as Luigi and it all works well enough for the most part, though it's a shame both players have to stick together (roaming players are turned into a bubble and sent back to their partner). This made sense in the Wii version in which everyone was sharing a single screen, but when both players have their own display they really should be awarded a little more freedom. At least the leading player isn't always Mario, though: it changes at times

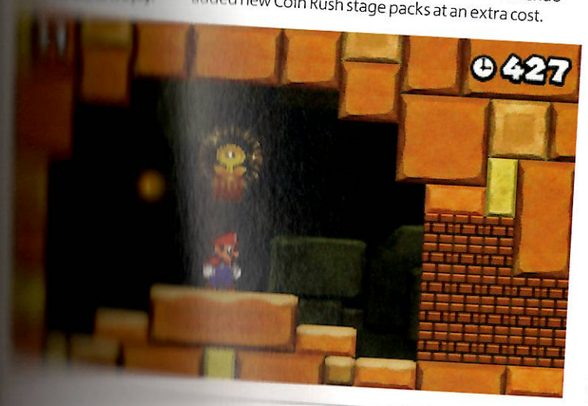


Every step he takes sees a coin spurt from his head. Jog and you'll be rich!

throughout the course of each level. The other big addition to the game is the Coin Rush mode. This takes three random levels from certain worlds (there are various unlockable packs and more can be bought as DLC, each containing levels from different worlds) and tasks you with clearing all three of them without losing a life, at which point your total number of coins will be recorded and compared with others over StreetPass.

THE JOY OF SIX

This does put an interesting spin on things, even though the random nature of the levels does make it a little harder to perfect a high score when the goalposts keep moving every time. Still, this encourages the player to master every single stage in order to prepare for every possible combination. Over time Nintendo added new Coin Rush stage packs at an extra cost.

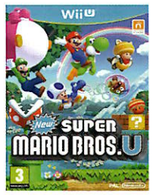


Despite the fact they weren't free we welcomed them as they added some devious new challenges and because, hey, it doesn't hurt to have more levels. This is particularly true when you consider that the main game – as in the original *New Super Mario Bros.* – only has six main worlds (with another two hidden 'main' ones and the now customary extra world at the end).

Whereas the hidden worlds were relatively straightforward to find in *New Super Mario Bros.* if you kept a keen eye out during certain cutscenes, *NSMB2*'s hidden worlds (2 and 4) were an absolute nightmare to find and as a result many gamers (especially younger ones) may never find them. We won't spoil their hiding spots for those of you who enjoy the thrill of the hunt, though anyone wanting an easy shortcut can feel free to check for their location on **ONM**'s website.

Taken all together and *New Super Mario Bros. 2* is the very definition of bitter-sweet, giving with one hand and then taking away with the other. By default it's the best side-scrolling platformer on the 3DS – unless you fancy things a bit furrier, in which case go for *Donkey Kong Country Returns 3D* – and yes, it's even better than the original *New Super Mario Bros.* But that came out six years ago now, and in that time we'd really expected the series to have progressed a little further than just a 3D effect and Coin Rush mode.

In our eyes then, *Super Mario 3D Land* remains the best Mario adventure to have graced the 3DS so far, thanks to its more effective use of three dimensions, its greater longevity and its wider range of experiences. Mind you, you should by all means still grab *New Super Mario Bros. 2* because it still provides you with another serving of the nourishing Mario action you know and love. It's just that in the grand scheme of things it could have been so much more. +



FORMAT WII U **OUT** NOVEMBER 2012 **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO EAD **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO

New Super Mario Bros. U

Thank you, Mario, but our princess is in a higher definition

WHAT IS IT

Mario's first leap into HD came wasn't the cutting edge quest we expected, but a fine continuation of his insanely popular 2D revival series.

The worst bit about *New Super Mario Bros. U*? Probably the title. Specifically, that 'new' bit. Aren't all games 'new'? Sticking it on the box makes it look as if you've something to hide, as if the game can't convince of newness by its quality alone. It's the kind of 'new' that gets wheeled out in toothpaste and washing up liquid ads: all-new formula! Now with 23 per cent added jumping! Mario deserves better. He isn't a toothpaste or washing up liquid. For starters, the D-Pad leaves your fingers way more calloused than Fairy Liquid ever would.

That said, *New Super Mario Bros. U* certainly lures you in with the zesty whiff of novelty. Instead of the usual Peachnapping, Mario is physically thrown from the Princess's castle and is forced to trek back for the final encounter. Yes reader, after 28 years, the Princess isn't in another castle. Problem is, the castle sits on the other side of a massive landmass, handily presented in as a *Super Mario World*-style map. Zooming out offers a glimpse of tantalising areas to come and presents a more complete package than the self-contained grass/desert/ice tropes of past New Super Mario Bros. games.

The Wii U: home of not one, but two wonderful Mario games. Hooray!

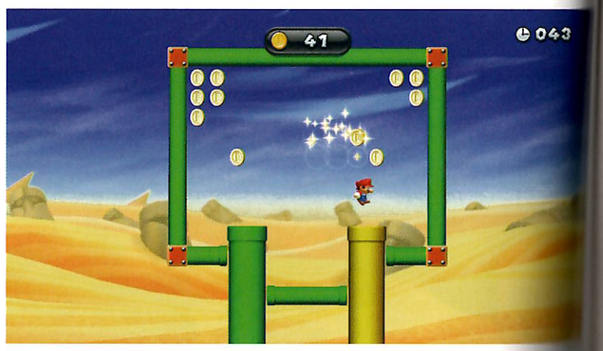
THREE-SY DOES IT

Despite the echo of *Super Mario World*, the launching point is still very much *Super Mario Bros. 3*. Influences are felt in the Toad Houses, Koopa Kid castles and the Battleships and enemies dotted around the map. In this game, bumping into a patrolling goon dumps Mario in an arena deathmatch. Instead of grabbing Toad tokens (as in New Super Mario Bros. Wii) Mario has to bash enemies to win bonus items, which are then stored to be later triggered before a level run of your choice.

If idea recycling seems stingy in the aftermath of *Mario Galaxy*'s big bang of innovation, you can at least trust Nintendo to wring out the last drops of fun from them. We've climbed Para-Beetles before, but never

PLAY IT NOW

Whatever your feelings about its essential newness might be, *New Super Mario Bros. U* is available to buy just about everywhere currently and can be purchased through the Wii U eShop as a digital download.



Every pipe leads to a mini-challenge. It's a game crammed with stuff to do.

around a barrage of screen-wide Bullet Bills. Weight-sensitive platforms and tilt-controlled elevators will tickle us with their rub-your-tummy/pat-your-head multitasking. Even the creaky old Ghost Houses get tasty renovations, thanks to befuddling P-Blocks.

Mario's power-ups don't teach our old dog new tricks as much as show off old ones practised to perfection. Ice Flowers appear in vast volumes, encouraging Mario to engage his wildest *Demolition Man* fantasy as he goes on a body-shattering rampage. Mini Mario's water-running routine ekes out new lines invisible to normal sized eyes and even when the Penguin Suit gets a tiny airing, it again turns innocuous slopes into eyelid-flapping speed rides.

SQUIRRELLED AWAY

Mario's big, new 'thing', the Flying Squirrel suit, is Raccoon Mario with a clipped tail. With his glide and prolonged wall grip, Squirrel Mario feels the costume very much with newcomers in mind. A measly upwards swoosh rules it out as a proper alternative to Raccoon flight, although mastery is required in order to sniff out all the hidden [illegible].

It's not as if every level is creatively barren. A [illegible] modelled on Van Gogh's *Starry Night* [illegible] Mario's pipes in sketchy pastels, while a [illegible] of gigantism gives us oldies nostalgic pangs [illegible] Giant Land. Climbing giant snake blocks [illegible] eight-foot Koopas is not just a change of [illegible] Nintendo's artists exploit Wii U's improved [illegible]

Nintendo gets away with covering this much old ground by feeding it through Wii U's HD guts. Sharp edges lend coins, blocks and Goombas such striking clarity that even a relatively empty level can look like an artistic statement, instead of developers putting their feet up. In a game all about crisp, snappy interaction – the crack of a kicked Koopa shell or the crunch of butt-stomped block – these clearly defined visual elements really come into their own.

PIXEL PERFECT

NSMBU isn't the game to sell Wii U's processing heft – it's pretty sparse compared to the carnival of colour that is *Rayman Legends* – but it does what it does with charm to spare. It's there in the way luminous star platforms cast a glow on Mario's portly tummy, or how rippling waves distorts the light on the Mega Urchins' prickly hides. A level built from glow blocks is bathed in such comforting warmth we nap every time we play it.

The improved resolution also enables the camera to pan out further when multiple players are on screen. Mario's four-man mash-up is largely unchanged since *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*. You tackle levels together, or compete in coin battles (now with customised coin placement), but both descend into a blur of accidental shellings and characters bumping each other into holes. If you enjoyed the chaos of the Wii version, you'll likely enjoy this, but multiplayer is an acquired taste.

Remove your bumbling friends from the equation and *NSMBU* is noticeably tighter than its Wii forebear. Where that game felt empty without three others, this world is densely packed with nooks and crannies aimed at the solo explorer. Secret exits abound – you can see the end credits with only a fraction of the levels played – and Star Coins require canny item usage to pluck from their hidey-holes. Beating the game is slightly easier than *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*, but it takes far more discipline to finish it completely.

Perhaps this renewed single player focus aimed to push private GamePad play? Solo players can use a Wii Remote or a GamePad. The new controller is our pick for pure comfort: the bigger D-Pad is kinder on the thumb and using shoulder buttons for Mario's spin jump is more reliable than Remote shakes. Despite holding the action in our hands, we still like to eye the telly – 40 inches of rainbow delight is preferable to five.

PAD IT OUT

GamePad powers *New Super Mario Bros. U*'s Boost Mode. This invites a GamePad player to place blocks with a finger, creating alternate routes (or obstacles) for heroes on the TV. Before you start plotting to rinse the game of Star Coins, know that Boost Mode is multiplayer only. Our one-man attempt to scam the game of its hidden treasures – tapping the GamePad with a little finger as we controlled Mario with a Remote – led to many embarrassing deaths.

Swapping a little finger for an entire human also leads to many deaths; Boost Mode is not as easy as the trailers made out. In those, players deftly built around levels and intercepted flight paths with pixel-perfect blocks. This writer can say with some authority that **ONM** staff writer Joe Skrebels did not help film those adverts. Take stages at anything other than a snail's pace and Nintendo's jolly ditties are drowned out by a cacophony of crunched skulls and sweary plumbers. Peter better swap his pearly gates for a revolving door. Boost Mode is better suited to beginners.

Patient partners can methodically mollify stages by plugging death pits and laying stairwells to safety. More advanced tactics follow a decidedly steeper learning curve. Trying to evaluate the Boost Mode's theoretical potential for speedrunners is unwise. We don't all have the ability, patience or time to become Mario masters. In some ways it has always been the problem with the New Super Mario Bros. series: so much its mechanical depth comes from speedrunning or indulging in trick play that it's a level beyond 99 per cent of players who buy the thing.

> "BRIGHTENS, TOUGHENS AND LEAVES YOU WITH A LOVELY SMILE"

If you're reading this Mario Special you're probably the person who never removes finger from the run button: there remains a big gap between that and some Guiness World Record. Part of the problem with the scene is that speedrunning is its own reward and isn't a tangible enough goal for the Xbox Action Generation. What's interesting is how *New Super Mario Bros. U* tries to rectify this.

FEEL THE RUSH

First up is Boost Rush: an auto-scrolling stage that ramps up speed every time 10 coins are collected. We often liken it to a Mario treadmill: the mode forces to take levels at speed, setting your own pace by grabbing coins. Nintendo learned from mistakes in *New Super Mario Bros. 2*: it's still arranged in packs – themed around

or power-ups – but packs comprise of set stages. Coin Rush's randomised packs made it hard to learn and better yourself: here you can keep restarting stages until they click and you begin improve..

Challenges are the really clever bit. This collection of training exercises mixes time trials, timed coin grabs, 1-up harvesting and skill tests. Like Mission mode in Smash Bros, tasks single out core mechanics in order to improve your appreciation of them. Ace a level without collecting a coin; earn 30 1-ups from a Dry Bones trio; squirrel glide an entire level without touching the ground... striving for gold medals develops skills that are transferable to the main game.

Even the cruel Boost Mode is put into perspective, thanks to special two-player survival courses. Relying on Joe's blocks to navigate a maze of Piranha Plants is as close as this writer has come to murdering a fellow human being, but we left as better players.

The point is that not everyone knows how to play a Mario game. They know enough to reach the end credits, sure, but true appreciation runs deeper. It's about triple jumping over levels to the sound of mock-Italian whoops. It's about milking enemy ranks for 1-ups that you'll never cash in. Vitally, it's about cresting the flagpole with your heart bouncing off your ribcage. The ecstasy of Mario is seeking the impossible in the possible and doing it anyway: *New Super Mario Bros. U* is the first two-dimensional Mario game to actively show you how.

Perhaps *Renewed Super Mario Bros. U* would make a better title for this game. Instead of promising what you've never seen, it teaches you what you never realised. Looking for a game to really push your Wii U and drown you in unfettered imagination? *Super Mario 3D World* is ready and waiting. Looking to master the forgotten arts of platforming? Come to this with an open mind and you'll leave with aching fingers and a smug sense of achievement.

Taken in the right way, *New Super Mario Bros. U* refreshes, brightens, toughens and leaves you with a lovely, dazzling smile. Perhaps it would make a pretty good toothpaste, after all. +

MARIO'S MAGIC MOMENTS

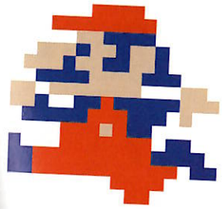
LAND OF GIANTS
Mario visited Giant Land in *Super Mario Bros. 3*, but only in HD can we appreciate the wallop of a kicked shell the size of the Isle of Wight.

SERIOUSLY UNBALANCED
There's nothing quite like using the Wii Remote to take control of a platform's orientation in order to screw over the other players. Ha!

OH MII, OH MY
After years of watching Mario hog the limelight there's something especially fun about being the star yourself. Aside from all the deaths.

The Great Big Mario Quiz

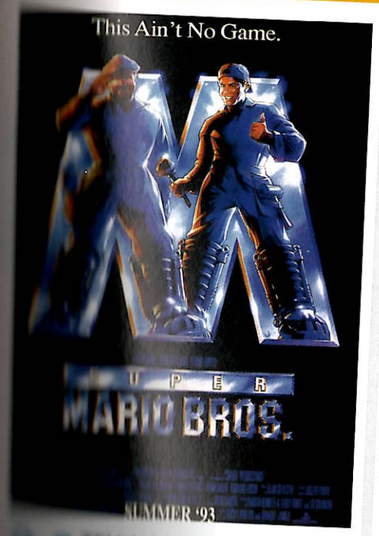
Do you know your Mario from your Wario?
Take our fiendishly difficult test and find out just how much of a fan you really are...



01 WHAT WAS MARIO'S NAME BEFORE IT BECAME MARIO?
A. JUMPMAN B. HAMMERMAN
C. SNOOP DOGG

02 WHICH MUSICAL GENIUS COMPOSED THE LOVELY TUNES YOU HEAR IN *SUPER MARIO BROS.* AND MANY OTHER MARIO GAMES?

03 'TRACHEA MINSTREL' IS AN ANAGRAM FOR WHICH MARIO VOICE ARTIST?



04 TELL US THIS: HOW GOOD WAS THE *SUPER MARIO BROS.* MOVIE?
A. SO GOOD
B. REALLY, REALLY GOOD
C. IT WAS THE WORST

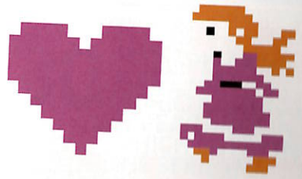
05 DID PRINCESS DAISY APPEAR IN *MARIO KART 64*?

06 COMPLETE THESE POPULAR YOUTUBE LYRICS:
IT'S CALLED A ROAD, IT'S CALLED 'A...

07 'FUNGI', 'FLORA', 'CELESTIAL BODY' AND 'EXTRAORDINARY' ARE DIFFERENT NAMES FOR WHAT FAMOUS MARIO AWARDS?

08 SO THEN, WHAT DOES THE 'M' STAND FOR ON MARIO'S ICONIC HAT?

09 WHO WAS MARIO'S BEAU BEFORE PEACH CAME ALONG?



10 WHAT DOES F.L.U.D.D. STAND FOR?

A. FEARFUL LUIGI'S UPSETTINGLY DISTURBING DIARY
B. FLASH LIQUIDIZER ULTRA DOUSING DEVICE
C. FAST LUNGING UNDERMINES DELICATE DANCING

11 WHICH POWER UP ENABLES MARIO TO CLONE HIMSELF?

12 WHICH MARIO CHARACTER WAS THE FIRST TO GET A WAX STATUE IN 2003?

13 WHAT DOES LUIGI WIN AT THE START OF *LUIGI'S MANSION*?

14 'FREER IF OWL' IS AN ANAGRAM OF WHICH POWER UP?

15 WHAT REPLACES POWER STARS IN *SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE*?

16 MAKE THE WARP PIPE NOISE. YOU WILL BE JUDGED ON ACCURACY, CLARITY AND VOLUME.

17 WHAT SHAPE IS DELFINO ISLAND?

18 WE RAN A GAME TITLE THROUGH GOOGLE TRANSLATE A FEW TIMES AND IT GAVE US 'MARIO IS SUNNY'. WHAT WAS IT?

19 WE'VE RE-DEFINED THESE THREE GAMES. CAN YOU WORK OUT WHAT THEY ARE?

A. MARVELLOUS MANUSCRIPT MARIO
B. SPLENDID MARIO BRIGHTNESS
C. FABULOUS FEATHER BENDER FRATERNITY

20 IN WHAT SERIES OF GAMES WOULD YOU EXPECT TO SEE MARIO ALONGSIDE PAC-MAN?

21 WHAT THREE ITEMS MUST BE DESTROYED IN ORDER TO WIN MARIO KART'S BATTLE MODE?

22 HOW MANY CHARACTERS HAVE APPEARED IN EVERY MARIO KART GAME?

23 WHAT CONTROVERSIAL MECHANIC DID *DOUBLE DASH* ADD TO THE TRADITIONAL MARIO KART FORMULA?

24 WHICH OF THESE IS NOT A REAL MARIO KART ITEM:
BANANA, MUSHROOM, BOOMERANG, LUCKY SEVEN, RACCOON TAIL, FROG BOOST, GREEN SHELL, BLUE SHELL

25 HOW MANY POWER STARS ARE THERE IN *SUPER MARIO 64*?

26 HOW MANY EXTRA STARS WOULD ADD FOR *SUPER*

27 GROUND THEME (THE MAIN MARIO THEME TUNE) WAS IN THE BILLBOARD RINGTONE CHARTS FOR HOW MANY WEEKS?

A. 50
B. 250
C. 125

28 WHAT'S THE SHORTEST TRACK IN MARIO KART HISTORY?

29 WHAT WAS MARIO'S JOB BEFORE HE WAS A PLUMBER?

30 PETEY PIRANHA MADE HIS FIRST MARIO KARTING APPEARANCE IN WHICH ENTRY IN THE SERIES?

31 THE WARIOWARE SERIES GOES BY WHAT TITLE IN JAPAN?

32 NAME 3 LUIGI GAMES THAT WERE RELEASED IN THE YEAR OF LUIGI.

33 THE ORIGINAL MARIO KART GAME WAS RELEASED FOR WHICH CONSOLE?

34 MARIO TEAMED UP WITH WHICH CHARACTER TO COMPETE IN THE OLYMPICS IN 2007?

35 WHICH MARIO KART STAGE APPEARS IN *SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL*?

36 WHAT DOES THE 'E' IN PROFESSOR E. GADD STAND FOR?

37 HOW MANY TYPES OF MUSHROOM ARE THERE IN THE MARIO KART SERIES?

38 WHAT GAME SAW MARIO'S DEBUT AS 'MARIO'?

A. DONKEY KONG
B. MARIO BROS.
C. DONKEY KONG JR.

39 WHICH MARIO CHARACTER COULD BE ALTERNATIVELY DESCRIBED AS 'FRUIT ROYALTY'?

40 WHAT NOISE IS USED TO DEFEAT HOOKTAIL IN PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR?

A. MICROWAVE PING
B. CRICKET CHIRPING
C. BALLOON POPPING

41 BOWSER APPEARS AS A CAMEO IN WHICH 2012 DISNEY ANIMATED FILM?

42 WHAT'S PEACH'S WEAPON IN *SUPER PRINCESS PEACH*?

43 HOW [illegible]

44 WHICH IS THE OLDER BROTHER OUT OF MARIO & LUIGI?

45 IN *SUPER MARIO 64*, HOW MANY POWER STARS ARE NEEDED TO FIGHT BOWSER FOR THE FIRST TIME?

46 WHICH OF THESE IS NOT A REAL MARIO GAME?

A. I AM A TEACHER: SUPER MARIO SWEATER
B. MARIO TEACHES TYPING
C. SUPER MARIO BROS. & FRIENDS: WHEN I GROW UP

47 WHICH BRITISH ACTOR PLAYED MARIO IN THE *SUPER MARIO BROS.* FILM?

48 'TAPIR MAYOR' IS AN ANAGRAM OF WHICH MARIO SERIES?

49 WHERE DO THE MARIO & LUIGI SEGMENTS OF *MARIO & LUIGI: BOWSER'S INSIDE STORY* LARGELY TAKE PLACE?

ANSWERS

1. A. JUMPMAN
2. SHIRKONDO
3. CHARLES MARTINET
4. IT WAS THE WORST
5. [illegible]
6. RAINBOW ROAD
7. [illegible] KART CUPS
8. [illegible] (OBVIOUSLY)
9. [illegible]
10. FLASH LIQUIDIZER
11. [illegible] DEVICE
12. DOUBLE CHERRY
13. [illegible] THIS IS TOO
14. [illegible]
15. [illegible] MANSION
16. [illegible] FLOWER
17. [illegible] SPRITES
18. [illegible] BLOOP BLOOP
19. [illegible]
20. [illegible] MARIO
21. [illegible]
22. [illegible] PAPER MARIO

B. SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
C. SUPER SMASH BROS.
20. MARIO KART ARCADE
21. BALLOONS
22. SIX
23. TWO RACERS IN A KART
24. FROG BOOST
25. 120
26. 30
27. C: 125
28. BABY PARK
29. CARPENTRY
30. DOUBLE DASH!!
31. MADE IN WARIO
32. PICK FROM: LUIGI'S MANSION 2; NEW SUPER LUIGI BROS. U; MARIO AND LUIGI: DREAM TEAM; DR LUIGI; LUIGI BROS. IN SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD; SUPER LUIGI BROS. IN NES REMIX 2
33. SNES
34. SONIC
35. MARIO CIRCUIT
36. ELVIN
37. THREE: REGULAR, MEGA, GOLDEN. (FOUR IF YOU ALSO COUNT THE CPU-ONLY POISON MUSHROOM)
38. C) DONKEY KONG JR.
39. PRINCESS PEACH
40. B) CRICKET CHRIPING
41. WRECK-IT RALPH
42. UMBRELLA
43. 2000M
44. MARIO
45. EIGHT
46. TRICK QUESTION: THEY'RE ALL REAL!
47. BOB HOSKINS
48. MARIO PARTY
49. INSIDE BOWSER
50. LAKITU

50 WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE CHARACTER THAT STARTS EACH RACE IN *MARIO KART Wii*?

HOW WELL DID YOU DO?

1-15 Get yourself a subscription to this magazine sharpish, it sounds like we have a lot to teach you. Do you even know who Mario is?

16-30 Not bad, but maybe you need to play *I Am A Teacher: Super Mario Sweater* a few more times before you can call yourself a Mario know-it-all.

31-40 Hmmm, impressive. You probably know more than we did before we started researching for this quiz. Have a gold star. You have to get it yourself, though.

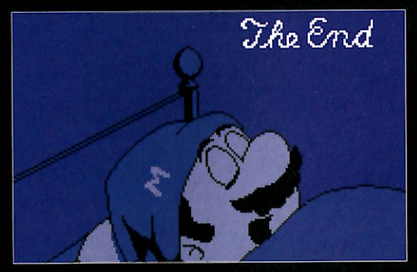
41-49 Nicely done! You clearly know your Mario from your Shadow Mario. You can probably identify a Mario game blindfolded. We salute you.

50 Liar.

THE END

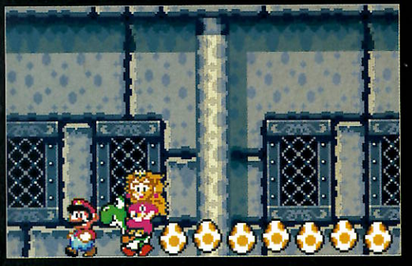
So, we've come to the end of this celebration of Mario past, present and future. **What better way to say goodbye than with the man's greatest ending moments?**

1 SUPER MARIO BROS.
Like all the best fairy tales, the ending here is simple – Mario finds his princess and sets off on a brand new quest. For the first time in a long time, she wasn't in another castle. Phew.



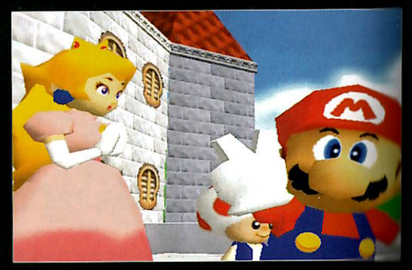
2 SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
For a strange game, this has an appropriately odd send-off, as it's revealed that everything you've just done was part of a Mario cheese dream. Well, that certainly explains why Birdo was in it.

3 SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
This one's just a prank – Mario defeats King Koopa, finds a weeping Princess Peach, and is almost fooled into believing it's not her. Until the credits roll. Can't believe we almost fell for it.



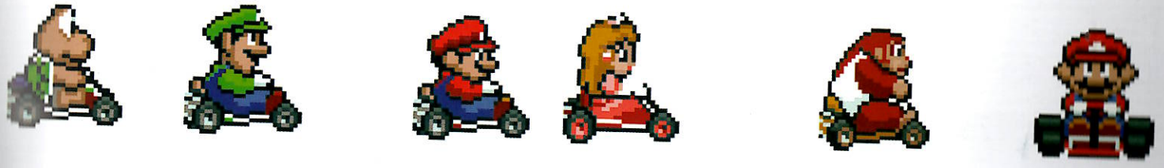
4 SUPER MARIO WORLD
Mario rescues Peach, plonks her on Yoshi's back and takes a walk past every location he stomped through, right back to Yoshi's abandoned hut from the very beginning. What a lovely trip.

5 SUPER MARIO KART
Winning the rock-hard Special Cup sees your character cheering atop a podium, equipped with what looks suspiciously like a celebratory tipple. You do not want to meet Donkey Kong when he's drunk.



6 SUPER MARIO 64
Mario's a simple man, and his ultimate reward for saving the Mushroom Kingdom is a kiss on his bulbous nose – which leads to this happy gesture. We'd have settled for the cake she promised us.

7 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.
We don't want to be rude, but it seems Mario's just in it for the smooches – this game ends with a pack on the cheek for the victorious hero. Was that really worth melting poor Bowser for?

8 SUPER MARIO GALAXY
In Mario's most bombastic ending, the entire universe ends, Mario meets a cosmic goddess, and this little Luma saves the day and survives to wave us off. This is proper *2001: A Space Odyssey* stuff.

9 SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2
After saving the universe once more, Mario's favourite Luma thanks him for his help and nicks his famous cap, leaving his heart warm, and his bonce cold. Talk about ungracious!